NATION

Lucknow building used for biz illegally, had only 1 exit

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BUSINESS

Markets go into tailspin; Sensex, Nifty drop over 1 pc

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SPORTS

Mbappe scores twice for France

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈ روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in | 24 JUNE 2026 | WEDNESDAY | BENGALURU | 8 MUHARRAM 1448 H | Vol 5 | Issue No 163 | Pages: 8

Belagavi hospital delays surgeries over water scarcity

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

With Belagavi grappling a severe water crisis, the district hospital has reportedly deferred non-critical surgeries and limiting inpatient admissions to focus on emergency cases until the water situation improves.

The city is now being supplied water once every eight days, with the schedule remaining uncertain. This is a massive increase, as several areas earlier received water once only every five days. The Belagavi district hospital has around 1,000 inpatient beds, and performed an average of 50 surgeries daily, of which about five are emergency procedures that cannot be delayed. However, sources said that hospital had instructed heads of departments to postpone all surgeries. *—PTI*

>>>MORE ON PAGE 2

India, US hold fresh talks on trade deal

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

India and the United States on Tuesday held high-level trade talks aimed at recalibrating a proposed bilateral trade agreement after changes in US tariff policy disrupted a framework negotiated earlier this year.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal met US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer as both sides sought to conclude an interim trade pact before 24 July, when Washington's temporary 10 per cent tariffs on imports from all countries are due to expire. *—PTI*

>>>MORE ON PAGE 3

Union Minister George Kurian quits after BJP's RS snub

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

Union minister and veteran BJP leader from Kerala George Kurian on Tuesday resigned from the Union Council of Ministers following expiry of his Rajya Sabha term.

Kurian, 65, was Union Minister of State for Minority Affairs and also for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying. President Droupadi Murmu has accepted Kurian's resignation, a communique issued by the Rashtrapati Bhavan said. BJP had decided not to renominate Kurian, whose term ended on 21 June , in the recent Rajya Sabha polls.

He was elected unopposed to the Rajya Sabha in August 2024 from Madhya Pradesh for the remaining term of the seat vacated by Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

Reveal social media handles, politics barred: Govt to NGOs

FCRA norms tightened; NGOs must stick to approved activities

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

The Union Home Ministry has tightened regulations governing foreign-funded non-governmental organisations (NGOs), mandating disclosure of social media accounts, restricting activities to predefined categories and geographical areas, and barring political or ideological content.

Under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Rules, 2026, notified on 22 June, NGOs seeking registration, renewal or prior permission under the FCRA must declare all active social media handles and websites. They and their key functionaries must also disclose any books, magazines or articles published by them, as foreign-funded organisations are prohibited from producing or broadcasting "news or current affairs".

The amended rules require applicants to choose their objectives from a fixed list of religious, cultural, economic, educational and social purposes. Existing FCRA-registered organisations have one year to intimate the government about their selected purposes.

Educational programmes dealing with constitutional rights and civic duties must remain strictly non-political, while cultural activities such as art promotion and heritage preservation must exclude political or ideological content. Though the rules permit a range of faith-based charitable activities, they explicitly bar proselytisation or forced religious conversions.

To retain licences, NGOs must show they spent at least Rs 10 lakh of foreign contributions on approved activities during the previous two financial years. Organisations receiving money through donor-advised funds or intermediary remittance channels must disclose the ultimate donor.

For NGOs operating under prior permission, fresh instalments of foreign funds will be released only after at least 75 per cent of the earlier tranche is utilised and verified through a field inquiry.

> To retain licences, NGOs must show they spent at least Rs 10 lakh of foreign contributions on approved activities during the previous two financial years.

The rules also broaden the definition of "key functionary" to include trustees, partners and others exercising management control. Foreign nationals, except Persons of Indian Origin, will ordinarily not be permitted as key functionaries.

Violations, including diversion of funds or exceeding administrative expense limits, can attract penalties of up to 30 per cent of the amount involved or Rs 1 lakh, whichever is higher. *—PTI*

India lifts ban on Telegram after NEET re-test

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

Instant messaging platform Telegram returned to service in India on Tuesday after a week-long government ban expired, with the app reappearing on Google's Play Store while remaining unavailable on Apple's App Store for several hours.

The platform had already become accessible to some existing users early on Tuesday morning before Google formally restored downloads. As of around 12 noon, Telegram remained delisted from Apple's App Store. Apple did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment.

Existing Telegram users on Apple iPhones were, however, able to use the messaging service.

The Centre had imposed a blanket ban on Telegram and its associated web services until 22 June, citing the platform's failure to curb the circulation of leaked and fake NEET question papers, misleading content and other fraudulent activities linked to the country's medical entrance examination process.

Telegram had challenged the temporary blocking order before the Delhi High Court. However, the court ruled on Friday that the restrictions were lawful, proportionate and necessary to safeguard the integrity of a national medical entrance examination. The court also rejected Telegram's contention that the government had acted arbitrarily or failed to follow due process. Before imposing the ban, officials met Telegram representatives on 3 June and flagged concerns over the platform's role in the examination-related fraud. *— PTI*

>>>More on Page 4

Iran: No return to pre-war Hormuz

TEHRAN, 23 JUNE

Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf has said that the Strait of Hormuz will not return to its pre-war operational status and asserted that Iran will manage the strategic waterway under its own arrangements, while maintaining adherence to international regulations.

Additionally, US president Donald Trump, in a social media post, has said that the strait would remain open "with no further Naval Blockade."

The statements came following the conclusion of the initial round of technical talks with the US as part of the 14-point memorandum of understanding between the two sides, with both agreeing to establish a High-Level Committee and a roadmap towards a final agreement within 60 days.

According to Iranian state media Press TV, Ghalibaf said Iran would exercise control over the key maritime passage going forward.

He also said ongoing negotiations were linked to wider conflicts, including developments in Lebanon, such as the country's territorial integrity and ceasefire commitments.

"We have never trusted the Americans; we don't trust them now, and it is only reasonable to remain distrustful in the future," he added.

He further added that the release of frozen Iranian funds and easing of oil sanctions have been ensured in the talks.

The US president, meanwhile, claimed that the funds and sanctions relief being released to Iran would be held in escrow accounts "controlled by the USA." and used exclusively for "the purchase of food and medical supplies" from the United States, including "corn, wheat, and soybeans from our great American farmers." *—ANI*

>>>More on Page 6

11 India-bound ships transited Hormuz after US-Iran peace deal since 17 June

SNAG DISRUPTS BENGALURU METRO PURPLE LINE

BENGALURU, 23 JUNE

Bengaluru's Namma Metro services on the Purple Line were disrupted during peak hours on Tuesday around 6.30pm. A train developed a technical fault near Cubbon Park Station in the underground section after its Current Collector Device (CCD), the equipment that draws electricity from the third rail, was damaged.

The disruption left scores of rush-hour commuters stranded, causing massive crowding and long queues at stations like Cubbon Park and MG Road, where passengers were deboarded. Stranded commuters expressed frustration over long wait times and a lack of information, with one passenger noting he had been waiting for nearly 40 minutes.

The Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited stated that its operations and maintenance teams were deployed on priority to address the fault. *—Agencies*

PADMA AWARD

President Droupadi Murmu confers Padma Shri to former India captain Rohit Sharma at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi on Tuesday *—PTI* *>>>MORE ON PAGE 5*

BJP starts action against MLC poll cross-voters

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

Karnataka Leader of Opposition R Ashoka stated that action has already been taken against party members who allegedly betrayed the BJP during the Karnataka Legislative Council (MLC) elections, following a meeting with BJP national leadership in Delhi.

Speaking to reporters after meeting the BJP President, Ashoka said the leadership assured that the cross-voting issue would be addressed appropriately. "We met our National President and held discussions on cross-poll issues.

He assured us to leave the matter to him and said that action had already been taken against those who betrayed the party." The meeting also covered organisational matters and strategies to strengthen the party and regain power.

The controversy stems from allegations of cross-voting during the 18 June elections, where BJP secured only two of seven seats despite having 64 MLAs, indicating a shortfall and internal dissent.

The BJP has formed a three-member committee, including MLC CT Ravi, N Mahesh, and MLA Mahesh Tenginakayi, to investigate the matter and submit a report by 25 June. *—PTI*

TN MOVES SC OVER LAMP LIGHTING ROW

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

The Tamil Nadu government has moved the Supreme Court challenging the Madras High Court order allowing the lighting of a lamp on the Thirupparankundram hill.

The C Joseph Vijay-led state government had moved the SC on 11 June and filed the petition through the Tamil Nadu government counsel B Karunakaran.

The counsel confirmed the filing of the petition challenging the 6 January order of the Madurai bench of the Madras HC that upheld the single judge's order of 1 December 2025, which had ordered that the ceremonial lamp be lit on the festival day.

On 6 January, the HC while upholding the single-judge's order, said the apprehension about law and order due to this religious practice is nothing but an "imaginary ghost".

It had made clear that the spot on which the stone pillar (Deepathoon) is located belongs to the Sri Subramania Swamy Temple and that the Waqf Board had no locus in the matter. "It is hard to believe the fear of the State that by allowing the Devasthanam to light the lamp at the stone pillar near the top of the hill located within its Devasthanam land, on a particular day in a year, will disturb to public peace," the HC stated. *—PTI*

DELHI GIRL SLEEPING ON FOOTPATH ABDUCTED, RAPED IN CAB

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

An 11-year-old girl was allegedly kidnapped while sleeping beside her family on a pavement, raped, and murdered in a cab in south Delhi's Mehrauli area.

He allegedly covered her body with stones in the car and resumed his routine, picked up another passenger. He later dumped her body in a forested stretch along the Faridabad-Gurugram road.

He was arrested within six hours of the incident, police reported.

The incident came to light after the girl's family, who lived on a footpath in the area, could not find her in the early hours of Monday. Suspecting kidnapping, family members contacted police. Teams checked CCTV footage and traced the movements of the suspect. The police officer explained, "The accused, a cab driver in his early 30s and a native of Bihar, abducted the girl around 5am. A case of kidnapping was registered immediately, and a large-scale search operation was launched. During CCTV footage checking, police got to know about the cab driver." Nearly 20 police teams tracked the suspect, who, after the crime, was returning to the location but fled after noticing police nearby. He was arrested within six hours, and during interrogation, he confessed to abducting, sexually assaulting, and strangling her. *—PTI*

NOT RESIDENTS OF THE PG

Bengaluru PG owner killed by 2 students over water

BENGALURU, 23 JUNE

A paying guest accommodation owner died after he was allegedly assaulted with a bat by two college students following an altercation, police said on Tuesday.

The deceased is Madhav Matle, 37, they said.

The incident occurred around 6.30 pm on Monday in front of his PG near Kasturinagar Main Road. A senior police officer said that the accused, Rakesh and Don Brite Son, were washing their feet using tap water inside the PG premises, to which the owner objected.

They were not staying at the PG where the incident occurred and were allegedly under the influence of alcohol at the time of the incident, the officer added.

The accused are Rakesh, a 21-year-old final-year BCom student and Don Brite, a 20-year-old first-year BBA student *—PTI*

In the meantime, Matle brought a bat to hit the accused. However, they allegedly snatched the bat and assaulted the victim, who later succumbed to his injuries, he said.

A case of murder has been registered at Ramamurthy Nagar Police Station in this regard, and both the accused have been arrested, police said.

Rakesh is a final-year BCom student, while Don Brite Son is a first-year BBA student. *—PTI*

'PSYCHO KILLER' POISONS 8, ATTENDS THEIR FUNERAL IN CHHATTISGARH

BALODABAZAR, 23 JUNE

A serial murder spree orchestrated by a "psycho killer" gripped a village in Chhattisgarh's Balodabazar, where a shopkeeper used lethal doses of borax powder to poison eight men over four months, police said on Tuesday.

The 46-year-old accused, Ram Sahay Jaiswal, evaded suspicion for months by helping grieving families and even attending the funerals of his victims.

He was arrested on Tuesday after two weeks of investigation and over a month after he killed his last victim.

Police said Jaiswal, said to be a "psycho killer" carried out the murders driven by revenge.

While the deaths had initially been treated as natural or due to some illness, villagers and relatives of the deceased approached police earlier this month, expressing suspicion about Jaiswal's involvement, they said.

Police exhumed the body of Jaiswal's last victim, Mahetaru Sahu, who died on 14 May. Ssubsequently, six more bodies were exhumed and sent to Raipur for autopsies. *— PTI*

Priyank to go legal if RSS does not submit docus

BENGALURU, 23 JUNE

State Home Minister Priyank Kharge stated he would pursue legal action if the RSS does not produce documents related to its establishment and expenses. He said, "It's just a week since I asked them for details. They are patriots with 100 years of history. They must have documents somewhere." Kharge indicated that the organisation should be given time, adding, "Why is there such a hurry? Give them some time. They may have to create one if they don't have any documents." When asked about consequences if they don't cooperate, he said, "There is law in the country. I will exercise restraint and act in accordance with the law." A three-member committee has been formed to investigate the matter, with a report due by 25 June. —*PTI*

PUC lecturers oppose proposed recruitment rules

SHIVAMOGGA, 23 JUNE

Pre-University college (PUC) lecturers in Karnataka have opposed the amended General Services Rules, permitting their deputation to teach in high schools. The associations of PU lecturers and college principals plan to protest in Bengaluru in early July. S Yogeesh, president of the Shivamogga PU Lecturers' Association, said "The government has produced no evidence to suggest that the quality of education will improve by deputing PU lecturers to high schools." Yogeesh accused the draft rules of weakening the PU education system and called for filling vacancies through recruitment and promotions. GF Kutri and other leaders attended the event.—*AGENCIES*

— PTI

HC denies bail to 4 for posts against Darshan's wife

BENGALURU, 23 JUNE

Karnataka High Court last month refused bail to four individuals accused of posting obscene comments on social media against actor Darshan's wife, Vijaylakshmi. The HC dismissed the petitions, emphasising that while freedom of speech is a Constitutional right, it has reasonable restrictions. The court noted, "Exceeding such restrictions or invading the personal liberty of another person, certainly would be an offence." It stressed that social media must maintain decorum and curb baseless or intimidating messages. Regarding one accused, Nithin GB, the court highlighted misuse of social media for harassment, rejecting his bail to deter the conduct.—*AGENCIES*

Udupi doctor, 3 held for adopting baby illegally

UDUPI, 23 JUNE

Four individuals, including a doctor, have been detained in Karnataka's Udupi district on suspicion of illegally adopting a one-month-old girl by forging documents.

The accused are Dr K Surendra Kamath, proprietor of Kamath Nursing Home, S Prakash, and his wife Sampath and Supreethi, who allegedly facilitated the illegal transfer.

Udupi Superintendent of Police Hariram Shankar said the case emerged after Child Welfare Department received information that a couple was raising an infant without valid adoption documents. A probe revealed the couple while being treated at the nursing home and approached Dr Kamath for adoption.

Police allege Dr Kamath created fake documents, claiming the child was biologically theirs. A case has been registered under child trafficking, forgery, and conspiracy.—*PTI*

No water, Belagavi govt hosp halts surgeries

Parts of Belagavi only get water once every 8 days as govt seeks to provide it for 2hrs/day

HIREKOP RAJAN SAMUEL
BELAGAVI, 23 JUNE

With Belagavi grappling a severe water crisis, the district hospital has reportedly deferred non-critical surgeries and limiting inpatient admissions to focus on emergency cases until the water situation improves.

The city is now being supplied water once every eight days, with the schedule remaining uncertain. This is a massive increase, as several areas earlier received water once only every five days.

The Belagavi district hospital has around 1,000 inpatient beds, and performed an average of 50 surgeries daily, of which about five are emergency procedures that cannot be delayed. However, sources said that hospital had instructed heads of departments to postpone all pre-scheduled surgeries and attend only emergency and critical cases.

Sources also said the hospital had curtailed fresh inpatient admissions, treating more patients through the Outpatient Department (OPD) until the water situation improves. Normally, the hospital admits 100 patients per day. The move was necessitated by the need to conserve water required for sanitation, bathrooms and other essential services for admitted patients.

The Belagavi district hospital is trying to treat patients in the OPD itself to save water —*x*

Ashok Kumar Shetty, Dean of the Belagavi Institute of Medical Sciences, confirmed that an oral instruction had been issued over the weekend to all departments about postponing surgeries, but said the situation had since improved. "The water problem has now been resolved, and all surgeries will be carried out as usual".

He added that the hospital ensured sufficient water shortage to the maternity department, which receives hundreds of patients daily, despite the acute shortage.

Belagavi Deputy Mayor Hanumanth Kongali told Salar News that the government was working to provide water to every ward for two hours a day, instead of 24/7 until the situation improves.

Kongali who visited Rakkaskopp reservoir, the main water storage centre for Belagavi on Tuesday, added that 20 Million Litres per Day (mld) of water from Rakkaskopp and 60mld of water from Hidkal reservoir in Hukkeri taluk would be used to supply water.

Belagavi North Congress legislator Asif Sait told Salar News the government would ensure that hospitals do not face any shortage of water.

INDUSTRIES ALSO HIT

The water crisis has also impacted Belagavi's industrial sector. Hundreds of foundry units in Belagavi city's industrial cluster have reportedly reduced operations by cutting down the duration of shifts due to inadequate water.

In March, there was a water problem in only 230 villages. Today, that number has reached 500! That means in three months, the problem hasn't halved. It's doubled. This isn't nature's failure. This is the government's failure.

-R Ashoka, LoP in the Assembly

Vikas Kalghatgi, former president of the Belagavi Chamber of Commerce and Industries, said industries had suffered setbacks after the government prioritised water supply for domestic consumption over industrial use. —*Salar News*

ULSOOR LAKE IS BACK

Birds began flocking to the City's Ulsoor Lake on Tuesday. The 108-acre lake was drained around four months ago for desilting and beautification, taken up at the cost of Rs 4 crore —*MOHAMMED ASAD*

LATE START, LONGER ROUTES CAUSED NEET STUDENT'S DELAY: COPS

BENGALURU, 23 JUNE

The Bengaluru Traffic Police on Tuesday said their "facts check" has revealed that late departure and selection of a longer route led to a student missing NEET exam on Sunday.

Police said the candidate left home just 33 minutes before the cut-off time and took a longer route despite a shorter alternative being available. "Traffic conditions were found to be normal, and traffic police personnel facilitated movement wherever required," they said in a post on X. They said the candidate left her residence in RT Nagar at 12.57pm while 1.30pm was the prescribed cut-off time for entry into examination centre. Police analysis indicates that the candidate travelled a longer route.

The BJP had blamed the Congress' mega-convention on the day for the traffic. —*PTI*

BLOODY DAY IN CITY

Woman, lover kill her parents and sister over live-in row

BENGALURU, 23 JUNE

A family dispute over a relationship is suspected to have culminated in a gruesome triple murder in Bengaluru, with police suspecting the involvement of a young woman and her boyfriend in the killings of her parents and younger sister.

The victims were identified as Somasundar, 52, his wife Muthulaxmi, 48, and their younger daughter Supriya, 19. Their bodies were found with multiple stab injuries inside an apartment at Seegenahalli in KR Puram on Monday night.

Preliminary investigations indicate that the couple's elder daughter, who had reportedly been living with her boyfriend for the past two months, carried out the murders with his assistance. Police suspect the family disapproved of the relationship, leading to tensions. Investigators believe the victims had visited the apartment were staying on Monday evening. An argument is suspected to have broken out, following which the three were allegedly stabbed to death. The accused are absconding and special teams were formed to trace them. —*PTI*

Elderly woman killed by daughter, grandson over booze

BENGALURU, 23 JUNE

A 70-year-old woman was allegedly beaten to death by her daughter and grandson in Bengaluru's Kengeri after she repeatedly objected to their drinking habits, police said on Tuesday.

The victim, Jayamma, had recently moved in with her daughter Bhagyalakshmi (49) and grandson Kushal (26). Investigators said tensions had been simmering in the household for several days, with neighbours frequently hearing loud arguments from the flat.

According to police, the mother-son duo allegedly assaulted Jayamma with a cricket bat and a wooden stick on Monday morning. She was found lying near the bathroom inside the apartment when police arrived.

Residents alleged Bhagyalakshmi and Kushal had been consuming alcohol and creating disturbances for months. Kushal had earlier been sent to a rehabilitation centre following complaints from neighbours but reportedly resumed drinking after returning home.

A complaint filed by a resident stated that Jayamma was heard screaming during a heated quarrel on the night before the murder. Police suspect the assault was triggered when she again tried to stop the pair from drinking.

Both accused have been taken into custody and booked for murder. -—*PTI*

Tejasvi asks for White Paper on potholes

BENGALURU, 23 JUNE

Bengaluru South MP Tejasvi Surya on Tuesday demanded a White Paper from the Congress government on pothole management and road works. He said more than 30 projects announced by the government remained pending and stressed that existing commitments should be completed before new projects are unveiled.

Addressing a press conference in Bengaluru after meeting Bengaluru Development Minister Krishna Byre Gowda, Surya called for stronger coordination among agencies such as Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL), Bengaluru Development Authority (BDA), Bengaluru Metropolitan Land Transport Authority (BMLTA) and Karnataka Rural Infrastructure Development Limited (KRIDL), arguing that the absence of a unified mechanism was hampering infrastructure delivery.

The BJP leader said he submitted a 15-point agenda covering urban infrastructure, transport, housing, water security and administrative reforms to Gowda.

BJP MP Tejasvi Surya submitted the 15-point proposal to Bengaluru Development Minister Krishna Byre Gowda on Monday —*X @TEJASVI_SURYA*

Raising concerns over delays in Metro expansion, he said the Orange Line and Metro Phase-3 had received central government but "it has been two years since approval, yet not even a tender has been floated. Not a single brick has been laid". He criticised proposals to reduce the size of Metro stations and platforms to lower construction costs and advocated extending Metro operating hours from 5am and increasing the BMTC fleet. —*PTI*

KEY DEMANDS

- Unified Infrastructure dashboard of BBMP, BMRCL, BWSSB, BESCOM in 60 days.
- Mission Walkable Bengaluru: Standardised footpaths, uniform curb design, starting with 50 priority roads
- Metro fare rationalisation to generate revenue through advertising and property, not by taxing commuters. Namma Metro is the most expensive in India.

The government says that nearly ₹5,500 crore has been spent on Bengaluru's roads. Within the next 30 days, the government must launch a publicly accessible live dashboard for all road infrastructure works in Bengaluru. Citizens should be able to see: which road is being worked on, the cost, the contractor, the officer, the timeline... (and) the real-time status -Tejasvi Surya, BJP MP

In a unique protest, farmers protested the proposed Mekedatu dam by burying themselves in sand on the Cauvery riverbed near Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, on Tuesday —*SCREENGRAB/ANI*

6 lakh acres of TN to go dry if Mekedatu is built: Farmers

CHENNAI/BENGALURU, 23 JUNE

Dozens of farmers in Tamil Nadu's Mambazha Salai near Tiruchirappalli protested against Karnataka's proposed Mekedatu dam on the Cauveri river by burying their bodies in the sand on the river bwanks on Tuesday.

Led by Ayyakannu, President of the National South Indian Rivers Inter-Linking Farmers Association, the farmers shouted "Save the farmers" and "Do not construct the Mekedatu dam". They also stood neck deep in the water.

"If the Mekedatu dam is built, the remaining six lakh acres of cultivable land in Tamil Nadu could be severely impacted, leading to further agricultural decline," Ayyakannu told press. "Farmers will continue their protest for the next ten days if the (Tamil Nadu) governments fail to intervene and protect their interests."

The project aims to construct a dam on the Cauvery River near its confluence with the Arkavathi River in the Ramanagara district at Kanakapura. —*Agencies*

SIR being used to create Hindu Rashtra: BKH

MANGALURU, 23 JUNE

New KPCC President BK Hariprasad alleged on Tuesday that the BJP government at the Centre was using the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls to create a Hindu Rashtra.

Speaking at the South Canara District Committee meeting at the Kudmul Ranga Rao Town Hall in Mangaluru, he said, "under the guise of SIR, BJP and RSS are carrying out a conspiracy to disenfranchise genuine voters".

Stating that "deleting voters by citing documentation is lethal to democracy", he asked who is mapping residents of of South Canara such as the Malekudiyas, Koragas, and Alemaris in remote villages, suggesting that the exercise could disenfranchise tribals.

"Whether Christians or Muslims, RSS and BJP know how to remove minorities and they do it," Hariprasad said, according to a release on X. "Their aim is to make it a Hindu nation; if they say none of them are citizens, that's it, isn't it? That conspiracy is being carried out through SIR." —*Salar News*

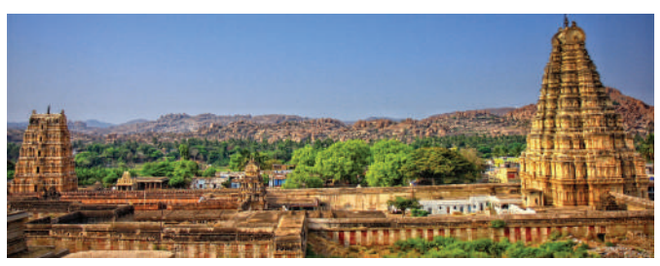
TO BOOST TOURISM

Govt plans 'Namma Guide' website, app

BENGALURU, 23 JUNE

The Karnataka Tourism Department is considering creating a new online platform, 'Namma Guide', to develop the state tourism sector and provide world-class facilities to tourists, officials said on Tuesday.

The services of local guides will provide accurate information about the history, culture, and significance of the respective areas to domestic and international tourists visiting any tourist destination in the state, they said. According to officials, the department will create a new dedicated website and mobile application.



"The role of our local guides is paramount in elevating the State's tourism to international standards. Modelled after foreign systems, the 'Namma Guide' website and app will be developed to enable tourists in our state to access guide services easily and transparently," Tourism Minister KJ George stated.

Additionally, this initiative will generate more employment opportunities for the guides already registered with the Department of Tourism, officials said.

The Department said that it is taking necessary steps to invite tech-savvy organisations, including startups within the State, to participate in its development. —*PTI*

—WIKIPEDIA

Bangla official went back on his own: MEA

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

Zahed Ur Rahman, the adviser to the Bangladesh prime minister, was permitted entry into India after re-confirming the purpose of his visit but he chose to return to Dhaka, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Tuesday. Bangladesh had lodged a protest with India after Rahman was briefly stopped by immigration officials at the Airport in New Delhi over a week back as his name figured in a security-related blacklist. "He was permitted entry after re-confirming that he came to attend the meeting," MEA's Jaiswal said. "He, however, chose to return to Dhaka," he added. —*PTI*

Is Andhra's missing man dead or alive, Jagan asks CM

AMARAVATI, 23 JUNE

YSRCP chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy questioned Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu about the missing youth, Gade Sai Krishna, whose family alleges he was murdered in police custody. Reddy asked, "Mr Naidu Garu, is Sai Krishna dead or alive? If he is dead, where is his body?" The case gained attention after Sai Krishna's mother accused Vijayawada's Krishna Lanka police inspector SSSV Nagaraju of torturing her son to death and secretly cremating him. An FIR was filed four days ago, and Naidu appointed a senior IPS officer to investigate. Police booked Nagaraju for murder on 19 June, and a Special Investigation Team was formed. Sai Krishna's mother is pleading for her son or his ashes. —*PTI*

Gujarat AAP MLA gets 7 yrs in jail for attacking foresters

RAJPIPLA, 23 JUNE

A Gujarat sessions court sentenced AAP MLA Chaitar Vasava, his wife, and seven others to seven years in jail for assaulting forest officials and extortion in a November 2023 case. Judge AV Hirpara also fined Rs 25,000 per person. The incident occurred on 30 October 2023, when forest officials removed illegally cultivated cotton. Vasava threatened the officials, slapped one, and fired in the air from a pistol at his residence. The accused extorted Rs 60,000 and Vasava later destroyed evidence. The case involves charges under IPC and Arms Act. Public prosecutor Amit Nair argued that witness testimonies and evidence proved involvement. Vasava was earlier arrested for attempting to murder a panchayat president. —*PTI*

3kg gold seized from ex-TMC leader's residence

KOLKATA, 23 JUNE

Over 3kg of gold, worth Rs 4.3 crore, was recovered from the residence of TMC zilla parishad member Tina Bhowmik Saha during a raid linked to extortion allegations against ex-MLA Sabyasachi Dutta. The operation was conducted late on Monday at Kishorepur, Nadia district, with police assisted by Karimpur officers. Dutta, in custody since 8 June, was brought to the home during the search. The gold, estimated at Rs 4.39 crore, may have been purchased using extortion proceeds, police suspect. Previously, around 3.5kg of gold was seized from Dutta's flat and bank locker. Bhowmik Saha denied wrongdoing, claiming the valuables belonged to her family and had been accumulated over years, with no links to extortion. The total gold recovered in the case exceeds 6.5kg. —*PTI*

India, US hold fresh talks on trade deal

India aims for preferential tariff

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

US envoy Sergio Gor, Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer meet in New Delhi in New Delhi—*PTI*

India and the United States on Tuesday held high-level trade talks aimed at recalibrating a proposed bilateral trade agreement after changes in US tariff policy disrupted a framework negotiated earlier this year.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal met US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer as both sides sought to conclude an interim trade pact before 24 July, when Washington's temporary 10 per cent tariffs on imports from all countries are due to expire.

Greer's two-day visit comes days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump met on the sidelines of the G7 summit in France on 17 June, giving fresh momentum to negotiations.

The US Embassy in India described the partnership as a "win-win", saying stronger ties would create American manufacturing jobs while supporting India's growth. It added that Washington remained committed to a "fair, reciprocal trade deal" benefiting both countries.

The discussions focused on revising the framework announced in February after a US Supreme Court ruling struck down Trump's sweeping tariffs, forcing Washington to impose a temporary 10 per cent duty under Section 122 of the Trade Act.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman also met Greer and discussed ways to deepen bilateral trade and economic cooperation. The meeting at Vanijya Bhawan was attended by Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal and India's chief negotiator Darpan Jain.

Securing preferential tariff treatment has become a key objective for New Delhi, as the revised US tariff regime eroded India's expected advantage over competitors such as Vietnam and other ASEAN economies.

Under the proposed pact, India has offered to reduce tariffs on US industrial goods and a range of agricultural products. It has also expressed its intention to purchase USD 500 billion worth of US energy products, aircraft, technology goods, precious metals and coking coal over the next five years.

The US remains India's second-largest trading partner. India's exports to the US stood at USD 87.3 billion in 2025-26, while imports rose to USD 52.9 billion. —*PTI*

BRICS NSA MEETING

Counter 'non-traditional' security threats, says Doval

NSA Ajit Doval, Iran's SNSC Deputy Secretary Nezamipour, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi, UAE's Supreme NSC Secretary-General Al Shamsi and others at the BRICS NSA meeting in New Delhi—*PTI*

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval on Tuesday raised concerns over emerging security threats and challenges in an increasingly digitised world, noting them as one of the key issues for deliberations at the 16th BRICS National Security Adviser meeting in New Delhi.

Addressing the gathering here, the NSA asserted that the "non-traditional threats" have advanced against conventional responses. Noting that the innovative variants of cyber threats and terrorism have created cross-border challenges, Doval recognised the need to navigate through these challenges.

Meanwhile, India on Tuesday welcomed the US-Iran MoU aimed at ending war in West Asia, with Doval saying the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz would strengthen global energy security and ease supply chain disruptions.

> **It is imperative for India and China to respect each other's core interests and take concrete actions to implement the important consensus reached by the leaders of both countries**
>
> -Wang Yi, Chinese Foreign Minister

Doval described the opening of the waterway as "a very welcome move for global energy security". Doval said the world was facing a "tumultuous time" marked by geopolitical uncertainties, economic strains and disruptive technologies. He warned that existing institutions were increasingly proving inadequate to resolve conflicts and noted that multilateralism was on the decline

The meeting was attended by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Russian NSA Sergei Shoigu, Iran's Deputy Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council Ghadir Nezamipour and other officials.

IRAN ACCUSES UAE OF AIDING ATTACKS

The meeting also witnessed sharp exchanges between Iran and the UAE. Nezamipour accused the UAE of allowing its territory to be used as a launchpad for attacks by the US and Israel and alleged that it had directly participated in military aggression against Iran.

Displaying a poster of children killed in an alleged strike on a school in Minab, Nezamipour urged the UAE to abandon "propaganda and adventurism" and choose "the path of peace, stability and regional cooperation". —*Agencies*

George Kurian likely to return to Kerala politics

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

> **I had never imagined, not even in my dreams, that I would become a Union Minister. It was only because Narendra Modi became Prime Minister that I was given the opportunity to serve as an Union Minister**
>
> -George Kurian

Union Minister of State George Kurian is likely to return to active organisational politics in Kerala after resigning from the Union Council of Ministers.

Sources in the BJP said the 65-year-old leader has expressed a keen interest in working in his home state and is expected to be tasked with strengthening the party's organisational base in Kerala. A prominent Christian face of the BJP, Kurian has long spearheaded the party's outreach to church leadership in the state.

Kurian, who handled the Minority Affairs Ministry and the Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Ministry, was inducted into the third Union Cabinet led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in June 2024. He was not renominated to the Rajya Sabha, reportedly due to the BJP's poor performance in the recent Kerala Assembly elections.

Born on 20 September, 1960, in Nambiakulam in Kerala's Kottayam district, Kurian completed his schooling there before pursuing graduation and post-graduation in Law. He has been associated with the BJP since its inception in 1980 and has also practised as an advocate in the Supreme Court.

Before joining the Union Cabinet, Kurian served as vice-chairman of the National Commission for Minorities and as Officer on Special Duty to former Union Minister O Rajagopal. —*PTI*

TMC expels 8 including Aroop Biswas

KOLKATA, 23 JUNE

The Trinamool Congress (TMC) expelled eight senior leaders from the party on Tuesday.

The leaders expelled are Javed Ahmed Khan, Firhad Hakim, Arup Roy, Rathin Ghosh, Biplab Mitra, Sabina Yasmin, Aroop Biswas and Snehasis Chakraborty.

The AITC had earlier in the day issued show-cause notices to these leaders, alleging that they engaged in anti-party activities.

The development comes amid a rift in the party after a rebel faction headed by West Bengal Leader of Opposition Ritabrata Banerjee on Monday announced the constitution of a new leadership for the All India Trinamool Congress Committee and appointed Arup Roy as its chairperson.

They also constituted a 30-member National Working Committee (NWC), reiterating that he wanted former chief minister Mamata Banerjee to be a mentor.

Mamata camp claims it sent office-bearers' list to EC before unveiling of the rival line-up

Meanwhile, the battle for control of the TMC escalated on Tuesday, with the Mamata camp claiming it had finalised a revamped NWC, and communicated the new organisational structure to the ECI.

The disclosure came as disMC sident leaders led by Leader of Opposition Ritabrata Banerjee prepared to approach the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of West Bengal, seeking to bolster their claim over the party organisation, and opening a new front in the struggle for control of the party founded by Mamata in 1998.

Leaders loyal to Mamata said, the TMC's leadership structure and a 24-member NWC were finalised on Saturday, and the revised list was submitted to the ECI on Monday, hours before the dissident camp announced a parallel organisational setup. — *PTI*

The AITC had earlier in the day issued show-cause notices to some leaders, alleging that they engaged in anti-party activities—*ANI*

Mamata election case judge reveals his BJP link

KOLKATA, 23 JUNE

Taking up an election petition by TMC chief Mamata Banerjee challenging the poll results in Bhabanipur assembly seat, Justice Gaurang Kant of the Calcutta High Court on Tuesday told her lawyer that his elder brother is a BJP spokesperson and he will hear the matter after full disclosure so that there are no issues later on.

After the preliminary hearing of Banerjee's petition challenging the election of BJP nominee

Suvendu Adhikari from Bhabanipur assembly constituency, Justice Kant ordered the preservation of CCTV footage of the counting hall on 4 May, EVMs and VVPAT machines of all polling stations in the constituency.

At the outset, while taking up the TMC chief's election petition, Justice Kant told her lawyer Kalyan Banerjee, a TMC MP, that he wanted to "make it clear that my elder brother is a spokesperson of the BJP."

Stating that this might be of some concern as far as the petition is concerned, Justice Kant said he will hear the petition "after full disclosure so that you don't have any issues later on."

Kalyan Banerjee told the court that he has full "confidence and regard" for the judge. — *PTI*

DIAPER DRIVE LAUNCHED

CJP alleges police attempt to shrink protest site

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

GET A DIAPER AT JANTAR MANTAR
ON 23 JUNE TO STOP THE PAPER LEAKS
CJP IS LAUNCHING A "DIAPER DONATION DRIVE" FOR EDUCATION MINISTER DHARMENDRA PRADHAN, BECAUSE HE CLEARLY NEEDS ONE.
PRESSURE ZYADA HAI.. HANDLE NAHI HO RAHA. LITERALLY.
01 BRING A DIAPER
02 WRITE ON IT
03 DROP IT OFF
Write "Dharmendra Pradhan Must Resign" on it.
We will collect all diapers and send to Education Minister.
JANTAR MANTAR | 6 PM
SEAL IT LIKE YOU MEAN IT
DIAPER DONATION FOR DHARMENDRA

> **They (CJP) are the B team of disruptive elements. Those who were rejected in democracy have come in disguise and are now after the system. They raise slogans for those who want to divide the country. They have been identified**
>
> -Dharmendra Pradhan, Education Minister

The Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) founder Abhijeet Dipke on Monday night alleged that Delhi police attempted to move barricades and "squeeze the protest site into a smaller area." The Party and its followers have been engaged in a sit-in protest at Delhi's Jantar Mantar against alleged examination-related irregularities since Saturday.

There was no immediate response from the Delhi Police on the allegations.

Meanwhile, the party also announced a "diaper donation drive" through a post on X as part of its ongoing campaign seeking the resignation of the Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over alleged NEET-UG paper leak.

They appealed to their supporters to bring diapers to the protest site, write their demand for Pradhan's resignation on them and participate in the campaign, Diaper A Day Keeps Leaks Away, scheduled for Tuesday evening.

The CJP has been demanding accountability over alleged paper leaks and examination irregularities, including the NEET controversy, and has maintained that the protest will continue until Pradhan resigns.

The protest has seen participation from students, aspirants and members of Left student organisations, including the SFI and the AISF. — *PTI*

SIT submits Ram temple donation probe report to UP

LUCKNOW, 23 JUNE

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing allegations of embezzlement of donations received at the Ram temple in Ayodhya on Tuesday submitted its preliminary inquiry report to the Uttar Pradesh government, officials said.

The SIT said the probe is still underway and further facts are being gathered.

The preliminary report was submitted by Lucknow Divisional Commissioner Vijay Vishwas Pant to Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Sanjay Prasad. Pant told PTI Videos that the SIT was trying to submit its final report within the next 10 to 15 days.

He said the report was confidential and he was not authorised to share details of the findings with the media at this stage.

Asked whether the team would return to Ayodhya for further investigation since the report submitted was only preliminary, Pant told PTI, "Of course, we will do that as per requirement."

The Uttar Pradesh government had on 13 June constituted the SIT on a request from the temple trust following allegations of misappropriation of donations received at the Ayodhya Ram temple. — *PTI*

Vijay says TN will stick to 2 language policy

LUCKNOW, 23 JUNE

The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Joseph Vijay hit back at critics who have labelled his TVK an 'actor's party' in the Assembly on Tuesday.

He criticised the Centre's 'imposition' of Hindi on non-Hindi states and also demanded to scrap NEET in his speech and rebuked critics of the TVK's political staying power and his administrative skills.

Vijay reminded the Assembly his party overcame "conspiracies and restrictions" and that neither it nor he had any intention of fading away.

On the row over NEET Vijay said the system "creates inequality" and called for it to be scrapped.

And on the 'imposition' of Hindi, the chief minister insisted that Tamil Nadu's two-language policy, i.e., Tamil and English is sufficient.

On the Karur stampede - at an election rally Vijay was scheduled to address - he said: "I can't express my pain about the tragedy where 41 people lost their lives. That pain will never leave me. But even that blame they put on us. Atrocious. Is politics this cruel?"

Chief Minister Vijay also launched a sharp attack on the DMK over its alleged "party funds," triggering a walkout by DMK legislators.

He also mimicked a viral hand gesture associated with former chief minister MK Stalin.

Vijay accused the DMK of collecting money in the name of party funds. "They are collecting money in the name of party funds. Every corruption case will be pursued, and we will not spare anyone involved," the CM said.

Vijay used the occasion to counter the DMK's allegations that the TVK had engaged in "horse-trading" to bring its former allies into the ruling camp.

Referring to the CPI (M) and the Indian Union Muslim League, he said both parties had taken their decisions independently on their own

He also took on the DMK over law and order, arguing that the opposition's criticism of crime and drug abuse were politically driven. — Agencies

— PTI

Uttarakhand gurudwara standoff resolved

DEHRADUN, 23 JUNE

The standoff at the Nagarasu gurudwara in Uttarakhand's Rudraprayag has been resolved peacefully with a group of Nihang Sikhs who were holed up at the shrine since Saturday vacating the premises after talks with a delegation of sect members from Punjab, officials said on Tuesday. "The gurudwara management and the police resolved the issue peacefully. All those involved have now left the premises," District Magistrate Vishal Mishra said. Around half a dozen Nihang Sikhs had stormed the Nagarasu Gurdwara on the evening of 20 June. They had demanded the release of some Nihang Sikhs arrested in connection with an incident in the Karnaprayag town of Uttarakhand on 16 June. —*PTI*

J'khand girl climbs tower demanding to free jailed lover

BOKARO, 23 JUNE

A 17-year-old girl climbed a 100-foot mobile tower in Jharkhand's Bokaro district, demanding her boyfriend's release from jail. Police said her 22-year-old partner was arrested recently for allegedly abducting her following her mother's complaint. The girl is from Lalpania, and the incident occurred in Dhendhe village, Gomia. She threatened to jump if her demand was not met. Gomia police officer-in-charge Prafful Kumar Mahto stated, "Efforts are being made to bring her down." The girl was rescued, and her boyfriend, from Ranchi, is currently in Tenughat jail. A police officer added that the girl's mother filed the abduction complaint on 18 June, leading to the arrest.—*PTI*

Hawker injured as cops make way for Rajasthan CM

JAIPUR, 23 JUNE

A woman street vendor sustained serious burns during police clearance of roadside carts ahead of a VIP movement in Jaipur. The incident occurred on 19 June near Mahal Road in Jagatpura, where police removed encroachments before a chief ministerial convoy passed. Rajasthan Opposition Leader Tika Ram Jully criticised the action, highlighting its insensitivity. The victim, Reshu Gupta, was preparing her momos cart when a police officer allegedly pushed it, causing boiling water to spill. She suffered burns on her shoulder, chest, and thighs. The police claim they acted to clear vendors for VIP movement, with the circumstances under investigation. Deputy Commissioner Ranjita Sharma said CCTV footage is being reviewed, and action will be taken if responsible parties are identified.—*PTI*

Haldia port is now immigration checkpost

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

The Union Home Ministry has designated Haldia seaport in West Bengal as an immigration checkpost, making it the 41st such port in India. The move was formalised through a gazette notification on Monday. Last September, the Ministry designated 34 sea and river ports as immigration ports. The orders were issued under sub-section (1) of section 4 of the Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025. A Ministry official confirmed, "The designation of Haldia seaport enhances immigration controls." The decision aligns with efforts to strengthen border security and regulate international arrivals at key maritime points. The move is part of a broader national strategy to improve immigration oversight at strategic locations across the country.—*PTI*

Lucknow building used for biz illegally, had only 1 exit

Cops nab building owner; Jaipur coaching centres shut

LUCKNOW, 23 JUNE

The FIR registered over the Aliganj building fire in Lucknow that claimed 15 lives alleged that the premises were being operated as a commercial establishment without adequate fire safety arrangements, emergency exits and measures to prevent smoke accumulation, police said.

The FIR, lodged at the Aliganj police station names four suspects and others. Those named, including building owner and operators of the pet shop and animation centre, have been arrested, officials said.

The FIR stated that the fire broke out around 2.30 pm on 22 June at the pet shop and clinic, following which firefighters, SDRF, NDRF and police personnel carried out rescue operations.

The complaint alleged that the building owners "had not made any fire safety arrangements" and that there was "no emergency exit or entry" in the building.

SIT member Lucknow Zone ADGP Praveen Kumar inspects the site after a fire engulfed a 3-storey building killing 15 people in Lucknow—*PTI*

The FIR alleged that the electrical system in the building was "highly irregular" and that there was no system to allow smoke to escape.

The complaint stated that due to these shortcomings, fire personnel, police and disaster response teams had to cut through walls to enter the building and rescue people.

Police said so far they have arrested pet shop operator Ram Krishna Upadhyay, 43, building owner Virendra Prasad Shukla, 62, animation centre operator Tushar Krishna Jaiswal, 31, and Suresh Kumar Sahoo.

Meanwhile, UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday cancelled almost all his scheduled programmes, including visits to Hathras and Agra, after the fire tragedy in Lucknow, officials said.

In Jaipur, the administration launched a crackdown on coaching institutes and libraries over fire safety violations, sealing 14 establishments and issuing notices to over two dozen others after blaze at a coaching centre in Lucknow that claimed 15 lives.

Two close friends Sanyam Vij and and Surajbhan Singh from Kanpur, both working as 3D artists at an animation studio in Lucknow, died in the Lucknow blaze, dealing a devastating blow to their families.

The Kanpur authorities have called an emergency meeting of officials to prepare a strategy against illegal commercial operations and unsafe buildings and have launched an enforcement drive to check emergency exits in buildings. — *PTI*

People take part in the protest announced by LAB and KDA in Leh on Tuesday—*ANI*

Shutdown in Ladakh for 'credible talks'

LEH, 23 JUNE

A shutdown called by the Leh Apex Body (LAB) and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) disrupted life in Ladakh on Tuesday, while thousands participated in a rally here to press for a "credible dialogue" with the Centre.

The protesting groups accused the government of deepening "trust deficit" by failing to incorporate key understandings reached during the 22 May talks in the official Minutes of Meeting (MoM), besides expressing resentment against the Lt Governor-led administration for taking decisions on issues such as liquor policy, land, power, transport and tourism without consulting the people.

LAB and KDA have been jointly spearheading an agitation seeking statehood for Ladakh and the extension of constitutional safeguards under the Sixth Schedule to the region. They have held several rounds of talks with the Centre since 2021.

LAB and KDA leaders have claimed that the 22 May discussions covered a proposed democratic structure for Ladakh with legislative, executive and financial powers, along with constitutional safeguards through a proposed Article 371K.

According to LAB co-chairman Chering Dorjay, it was also agreed during the talks that the bureaucracy, including the chief secretary, would function under the authority of an executive led by the people of Ladakh. — *PTI*

MADONNA AND CHILD

Italian Renaissance master Sandro Botticelli's 15th century painting 'Madonna and Child' (from Museo Stibbert, Florence), is on display at the 'One Mother, Many Mother Tongues' exhibition at the Humayun's Tomb Museum in New Delhi. —*PTI*

Law student held for peddling fake NEET questions

INDORE, 23 JUNE

A first-year law student has been arrested here for allegedly creating a fake NEET-UG question paper using an AI platform and selling it through social media ahead of Sunday's examination, police said.

Akshay Malviya, the accused, allegedly collected Rs 100 to Rs 200 from about 25 buyers claiming that he had got access to the genuine question paper, said an official. He was arrested on Monday.

"The question paper he provided had no resemblance to the actual one," said DCP Rajesh Kumar.

Malviya, a resident of Kanadiya area, created the fake question paper using ChatGpt, the DCP said. He appeared to have sold it to some 25 people but the number could increase, the official added. — *PTI*

'Inferior coal behind M'rashtra outages'

MUMBAI, 23 JUNE

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Tuesday admitted in the Assembly that the supply of inferior-quality coal has hit power generation in the state, and promised strict safeguards in tenders to keep errant suppliers at bay.

Raising the issue during the Question Hour, Congress Legislature Party leader Vijay Wadettiwar said the state has been witnessing power shortages, rising demand and shutdown of generating units.

He alleged that poor-quality coal was one of the reasons behind the technical problems faced by several units of state-run Maharashtra State Power Generation Company (Mahagenco).

Electricity demand reached record levels during the summer, he said, seeking action against suppliers providing substandard coal.

Responding to the concerns, Fadnavis said the quality of coal supplied to the state had impacted power generation.

He informed the House that the government had held discussions with the Union coal minister and had conveyed its stand on proper sampling of coal.

The CM assured that safeguards would be incorporated in fresh tenders to block suppliers of inferior coal and those seeking to take undue advantage.

Wadettiwar also asked whether the government planned to establish higher-capacity generating units based on new technologies in view of the state's growing power demand.

Fadnavis said that preliminary works were underway for an 800-MW thermal power project in Chandrapur. — *PTI*

Water contaminated in Thane's Yeoor: Social worker

THANE, 23 JUNE

A social worker alleged that contaminated water was being supplied in the Yeoor area of Maharashtra's Thane city and threatened to launch a protest if the Thane Municipal Corporation (TMC) does not address the issue in 15 days.

K Vrushali sent a memorandum to the TMC commissioner on Monday, saying that the unclean and mossy water poses severe risks.

Citing court rulings, she stated that neglecting safe drinking water violates the citizens' fundamental right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution.

She put forth various demands, including disinfection of the Yeoor supply, installing modern RO+UV filters with auto-cut sensors, conducting a city-wide water quality audit, and initiating legal action against negligent officials.

She said if the issue is not addressed in 15 days, she would approach the Bombay High Court. — *PTI*

SC STAYS HC ORDER TO FREE 1993 BOWBAZAAR BLAST CONVICT

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

The Supreme Court on Tuesday stayed the Delhi High Court order directing premature release of a life convict in the 1993 Kolkata Bow Bazaar blast case.

Justices PK Mishra and Sanjeev Sachdeva gave the interim relief on a plea filed by the West Bengal government, challenging the 5 June HC order directing the release of the 77-year-old convict Md. Rashid Khan who was convicted under TADA.

Appearing for the state government, additional SG SV Raju said the high court erred in its finding and questioned relying on the reformative theory for granting relief to Khan in a case where 70 people died and hundreds were injured.

Senior advocate MR Shamshad, appearing for Khan, submitted that he had spent over 33 years in prison, and highlighted that a co-accused, Pannalal Jaiswara, was granted remission in March 2014.

The bench, however, said the roles attributed to them were completely different while pointing out that Khan was the "mastermind".

Shamshad submitted that the conduct of the prisoner which has been good in the prison should be taken into account.

The bench observed that he was sentenced for an act which was "almost a terrorist act." —*PTI*

Pune man was pushed into gorge by fiancée, lover

PUNE, 23 JUNE

In a dramatic turn, police have arrested Ketan Vishal Agrawal's fiancée and her lover for allegedly pushing him into a gorge near Lohagad Fort on 18 June, passing it off as an accident. Initially believed to be an accidental fall during a trek, the investigation revealed a murder conspiracy, officials said. Agrawal, 26, a resident of Gahunje, Pune, and director of a family-run real estate firm, was found dead in a gorge after falling nearly 400 feet.

The police initially registered an accidental death report, with his fiancée Siya Goyal claiming he slipped while taking photos amid strong winds. The families had planned a wedding later this year, including booking a palace in Udaipur. Superintendent of Police Sandip Singh Gill said, "The circumstances surrounding the death appeared suspicious, prompting thorough investigation."

Ketan Agrawal, 26, a resident of Pune, and director of a family-run real estate firm, was found dead in a gorge after falling nearly 400 feet —*ANI*

- The police initially filed an accidental death report, with Ketan's fiancée Siya saying he slipped while taking pics

The probe uncovered Goyal's relationship with Chetan Babulal Chaudhary, who was in a relationship with her. Both allegedly conspired to eliminate Agrawal, considering him an obstacle to their relationship. Goyal took Agrawal to Lohagad Fort under the pretext of an outing, while Chaudhary was called later.

They then pushed him off the fort. Chaudhary was detained, and Goyal was arrested after interrogation. The police are investigating further to establish the exact sequence of events and whether others were involved.

Lohagad Fort is a UNESCO World Heritage Site linked to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's history. —*PTI*

COCONUT TREE DISPUTE

Kerala HC uses humour, Bible to end row

KOCHI, 23 JUNE

A simple coconut tree became the centre of an unusual legal battle in the Kerala High Court, prompting a judge to remark that if the tree "had the capability to laugh," it would probably have laughed at the neighbours fighting over it. Dismissing a writ filed over fears that the tree posed a danger, Justice PV Kunhikrishnan used colourful language to urge the neighbours to resolve the matter over "a cup of tea or coffee."

The case involved two neighbours in the Karakulam village of Thiruvananthapuram district.

In the order dated 18 June, Justice Kunhikrishnan described the litigation as "a classic example of unnecessary litigation."

The case involved two neighbours in the Karakulam village of Thiruvananthapuram district fighting over a coconut tree—*AI*

In an unusual touch, the judge quoted Matthew 22:39 from the Bible: "Love your neighbour as yourself." He urged both parties to read the verse and "sit together and solve the dispute."

The court found that there was "absolutely no danger" from the coconut tree quoting the Panchayat's findings, the Ombudsman's and the Advocate Commissioner's reports. Although the court said it was a fit case to impose costs on both parties for wasting time, it didn't do so.

"Let Jesus Christ bless them to follow the Bible's Matthew 22:39," the judge said in the concluding part of the judgment, adding that "only neighbours will be there in case of an emergency." — *PTI*

- In the order dated 18 June, Justice Kunhikrishnan of the Kerala HC described the litigation as 'a classic example of unnecessary litigation.'

Haryana IAS man held in Rs 60 cr IDFC First scam

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

The CBI has arrested senior IAS officer **Pankaj Agarwal** for allegedly siphoning off over Rs 60 crore from the accounts of the Haryana government maintained with IDFC First Bank, officials said Tuesday.

It is alleged that government funds were siphoned from the accounts of the Haryana School Shiksha Pariyojana Parishad (HSSPP) and the Haryana State Agriculture Marketing Board (HSAMB).

The fraud in these two departments involved the misappropriation of approximately Rs. 60.54 crore, forming part of a larger scam at the Sector 32 IDFC First Bank branch, in which funds amounting to Rs. 504 crore from eight Haryana government departments were siphoned off and routed to shell entities, the statement said.

The CBI has list 17 accused in its charge sheet in this Haryana case, including six bank officials of IDFC First Bank/AU Small Finance Bank, three public servants of the Haryana government, two companies, and six other persons.

The CBI is also probing two other cases from Chandigarh -- one concerning Chandigarh Smart City (CSCL) and the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation, and the other concerning CREST Chandigarh.

Agarwal will be produced before the special court on Tuesday. —*PTI*

DUSTY DELHI

The third major dust storm to sweep across Delhi-NCR in less than a month hit the region on Tuesday, bringing dark skies, poor visibility and squally winds of up to 100 kmph. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued a Red Alert on Tuesday, as severe thunderstorms, lightning and heavy rainfall battered the national capital. The storm first swept through Gurugram before moving into Delhi and Noida, disrupting flight operations at IGI Airport and affecting normal life across several areas —PTI

Breadwinners & students fall prey to Lucknow fire

A 22-year-old man who was the sole breadwinner of his family, an only child dreaming of a future abroad, a young woman just beginning her career, and a 3D artist excited about a planned holiday were among those killed in the devastating fire that swept through a commercial building in Lucknow's Aliganj area on Monday.

The tragedy not only claimed young lives but also shattered families, leaving behind ageing parents, grieving siblings and dreams that will now remain unfulfilled.

Among those killed was 22-year-old Abdul Rehman, an IT technician who had been working at Ariea Studio for the past year. A graduate and the sole earning member of his family, Rehman supported his mother Faimida and his father Afzal, who is paralysed. His death has left the family without a source of income.

Eighteen-year-old Sehjan, the only child of Mohammad Imran, was also among the victims. A resident of Jankipuram, he came from a small business family and had been attending computer coaching classes for the last one to two years. According to family members, Sehjan had been planning to move abroad in pursuit of better opportunities.

The tragedy also claimed the life of 22-year-old Sukhmani Singh. She is survived by her father Prabhjot Singh, a Civil Defence employee, her mother and a younger brother.

For the family of 25-year-old Aditya Srivastava, the loss is particularly difficult to comprehend. A 3D artist, Aditya had once been a student at the institute and later secured a job there. Friends said he was passionate about creating 3D characters and was happy with his work.

In his final moments, Aditya managed to call a friend. "Bhai, mujhe bacha lo (Brother, save me)," he pleaded, according to the friend. The friend immediately alerted authorities, but help could not reach him in time.

Family members of a victim, who died in the Lucknow fire incident that claimed 15 lives, carry the mortal remains for last rites in Sitapur, Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday —PTI

Aditya had recently purchased a new computer with his savings and was planning a vacation in Uttarakhand. Before entering the field of 3D design, he had worked in digital marketing.

His family members said Aditya was focused on his goals and determined to build a successful career. He is survived by his lawyer father, mother and a younger brother.

The death of 24-year-old Mohammad Ammar has left his family not only grieving but also facing an uncertain future. A native of Barabanki, Ammar had been working for the last four years and was the only earning member of his family.

Relatives said the family had recently begun planning his marriage.

Family described Ammar as a responsible son who shouldered the household's financial burden and had hoped to provide a better life for his parents.

As ambulances carrying the victims arrived one by one at the post-mortem house, only a handful of them were accompanied by relatives.

For many families, the agonising wait began at King George's Medical University (KGMU), where they rushed in the hope of finding their loved ones among the injured.

Most relatives reached the post-mortem house only after hours of frantic searching at the hospital. Many clung to the hope that their family member had survived.

"It is very hard for us to tell relatives that their family member is not admitted here and that they must go to the post-mortem house for identification," said a senior hospital staff member.

About 2km away, another painful process unfolded. Exhausted relatives arriving at the post-mortem house were first shown bodies and asked to identify them.

At the entrance of the post-mortem house, four police sub-inspectors sat behind a long desk, recording the details of the victims' relatives and completing the paperwork required before post-mortem examinations could begin.

As grieving family members arrived one after another, the officers quietly guided them through the formalities.

Only blood or close relatives were permitted to make a formal identification before the bodies were sent for post-mortem.

Among the victims were siblings Anamika, 30, and Somilya, 27, natives of West Bengal.

Police were still trying to contact their parents.

Their landlord Pankaj Arora was called to the post-mortem house to help trace family members.

"I don't have their parents' phone number. I got a call from the police, so I came here. Anamika had been living at my house as a tenant for the last three years, while her sibling brother stayed at another paying guest accommodation nearby," Arora said.

A major fire blazed through a three-storey commercial building in the posh Lucknow neighbourhood of Usha Mehta Marg in Aligarh area. The fire claimed 15 lives, most of them young adults who had gathered in the building for work or training. —PTI

PADMA HONOURS FOR THE GREATS

For artists, athletes, scientists and public figures, receiving a Padma Award is one of the highest recognitions the nation can bestow — an honour that acknowledges decades of hardwork and talent. On Tuesday, President Droupadi Murmu conferred the prestigious awards on 65 personalities from the worlds of cinema, sports, literature, public affairs and other fields at the second civil investiture ceremony held at the Ganatantra Mandap of Rashtrapati Bhavan. Actor Mammootty, playback singer Alka Yagnik, and tennis legend Vijay Amritraj, were among those honoured. The President presented the Padma Vibhushan to former Supreme Court judge KT Thomas for public affairs. Here is a look at the winners:

Actor Mammootty —PTI

Nagaland's folk artist Guru Sangyusang Pongener

Singer Alka Yagnik

Actor R Madhavan

Tennis legend Vijay Amritraj

Savita Punia

Ex-SC judge KT Thomas

Rupi Soren, wife of JMM founder Shibu Soren, received the Padma Bhushan on behalf of the late leader —PTI

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

'As fentanyl flooded US streets, govt watched and took no action'

This photo provided by the US Drug Enforcement Administration shows pills containing fentanyl which were seized by the DEA in New Mexico —AP

Even as the United States grappled with its deadliest drug epidemic, the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) allowed hundreds of thousands of fentanyl pills to reach New Mexico communities between 2023 and 2025 as part of efforts to build larger criminal cases, according to government records reviewed by The Associated Press (AP).

DEA agents tracked fentanyl shipments but chose not to seize them, hoping to gather intelligence and dismantle larger trafficking networks, which the White House last year labelled a "weapon of mass destruction".

The tactic has drawn sharp criticism from agents and experts, who argue it amounted to a dangerous gamble with public safety and may have violated Justice Department guidelines designed to protect communities.

"We poisoned our community to make cases," DEA Special Agent David Howell told AP. "Through our own wilful blindness, we get to say, 'We don't really know what happened to the drugs.' But we 100 per cent got people killed."

The DEA has long maintained that it cannot seize every shipment of illicit drugs. However, several veteran agents expressed shock at the scale of counterfeit fentanyl pills allegedly allowed to circulate.

Over the past decade, removing illicit fentanyl — manufactured largely in clandestine laboratories in Mexico — became the agency's top priority as overdose deaths surged across the country. Traditional narcotics investigations often involved allowing drug deals to proceed so agents could identify higher-level traffickers. But fentanyl's extreme potency, with just a few milligrams capable of killing an adult, prompted the Justice Department to issue special guidance encouraging agents to seize the drug whenever "practicable".

New Mexico, particularly Albuquerque, became a focal point of this strategy. The city contains a crime-ridden neighbourhood known locally as the "War Zone", plagued by drug abuse and violence. While overdose deaths nationwide fell by 14 per cent last year, New Mexico recorded a 21 per cent increase, according to government data.

A TESTING GROUND FOR A CONTROVERSIAL STRATEGY

Alex Uballez, who served as US Attorney for New Mexico from 2022 until last year, defended the approach, saying authorities sometimes allowed shipments to go unseized in order to gather intelligence and build stronger cases against major trafficking organisations.

"The bigger fish are worth catching," Uballez said. "And that will save more lives."

The DEA, meanwhile, insisted its actions were lawful.

AGENTS WATCHED SHIPMENTS UNFOLD

AP reviewed reports suggesting agents had exceptionally detailed intelligence on some drug transactions.

In June 2023, agents intercepted coded phone conversations and surveilled a deal at a mobile home park in Albuquerque. According to a 66-page report, traffickers delivered 74,000 fentanyl pills during the operation, a figure later confirmed by federal prosecutors in court filings.

Days earlier, investigators had watched the same trafficking ring deliver another shipment hidden inside a spare tyre, according to another DEA report. That consignment also went unseized.

"We did nothing but sit back and watch," Howell said.

The agent filed an official whistleblower complaint in 2023, arguing the practice endangered public safety.

Months passed before federal authorities finally dismantled the trafficking network. Howell said investigators cannot now account for what happened to the unseized shipments.

"It's outrageous to put that many lives at risk in hopes of making a big case," said Tristan Leavitt, president of Empower Oversight, a whistleblower advocacy group. The organisation has asked the Senate Judiciary Committee and the Justice Department's Office of Inspector General to investigate Howell's allegations.

A former DEA supervisor, speaking anonymously for fear of retaliation, claimed agents in Albuquerque allowed "millions" of pills to go unseized during a multistate investigation last year.

According to Howell's whistleblower disclosures, agents permitted at least 1.8 million fentanyl pills to be delivered during that probe.

The investigation ultimately culminated in what the DEA described as the largest fentanyl seizure in its history. Announced in May 2025 by then-Attorney General Pam Bondi, the operation led to the seizure of more than 3 million pills.

"The amount we ultimately seized was hitting the streets every month while that case was going on," the former supervisor said, adding that authorities could have dismantled the organisation six months earlier.

SPECIAL RULES FOR FENTANYL

As fentanyl overdoses became a national crisis, the Justice Department adopted internal "Fentanyl Protocols" in 2017. The two-page guidance instructed agents to "seize or otherwise prevent the distribution" of fentanyl "as soon as practicable", stressing that "protecting public safety is paramount" even if seizures jeopardised investigations.

Those guidelines were revised in 2024, granting investigators more discretion. T

The DEA rarely discusses the tactic publicly. Its internal manual states that seizing drugs is "the usual course of action" but acknowledges that investigative goals may occasionally be better served by allowing shipments.

Several current and former agents compared the practice to the infamous "Operation Fast and Furious" scandal of 2011, when US authorities allowed thousands of firearms to be trafficked into Mexico in hopes of tracing them to cartel leaders.

The operation sparked outrage after two of those weapons were linked to the killing of a US Border Patrol agent. The Justice Department subsequently prohibited agents from knowingly allowing firearms to be trafficked.

Critics now argue that fentanyl — a drug responsible for tens of thousands of deaths annually — deserves the same treatment. —PTI

Israel kills Gaza teen girl going to school

DEIR AL-BALAH, 23 JUNE

An Israeli strike killed a teenage girl on Monday as she walked to her high school to take an exam in Gaza City, relatives said. Raghad Hassan Ashour, 16, was headed to the 11th grade test when the blast occurred in a busy street in the Rimal district, according to a relative, Jameel Ashour. The military said the strike targeted a Hamas militant. Three other people were injured in strikes in the same area. Videos of the strike showed groups of people gathered around destroyed vehicles. . Rescue workers were also at the scene and bloodstains could be seen on the ground. Israel has continued to launch strikes in Gaza despite a ceasefire deal in October, killing over 1,000 Palestinians. —*PTI*

‘Stopping nukes supercedes depression’

Pezeshkian, Araghchi fly to Pak as Iran says no to nuke inspections, to form panel with Oman

Pakistan DyPM Ishaq Dhar, PM Shehbaz Sharif with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi in Islamabad, on Tuesday —*X @PAKPMO*

WASHINGTON, 23 JUNE

US President Donald Trump on Monday said he would “do what I have to do” if Iran did not honour its side of the interim peace deal, while adding that preventing Iran from getting a nuclear weapon “supersedes” the fears that the war and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz could cause a global economic “depression”.

“As long as they respect us, we are not going to have any trouble,” Trump said at the Oval Office. “If Iran doesn’t live up to their agreement, or if they’re not behaving, I will do what I have to do.”

Addressing concerns about the global economic impact, Trump rejected the suggestion that the war could trigger a depression. “Well, not the way I’m doing it. It’s not going to cause depression.”

Trump also claimed that Iran was okay with the IAEA conducting nuclear inspections, which Tehran promptly denied.

His comments came as Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi landed in Islamabad on Tuesday and met with senior Pakistani officials, including Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir, Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, and President Asif Ali Zardarito firm up their commitments to the Islamabad Memorandum.

This comes shortly after the talks in Switzerland.

In a jab at Trump, Pezeshkian warned against issuing statements that contradict the deal.

Meanwhile, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio will be travelling to the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Bahrain from 23 to 25 June.

> **I’ve been waiting for a Nobel (Peace Prize). They don’t think (stopping) eight wars is enough. Have to do 12-13**
>
> -Donald Trump, US President

IRAN, OMAN AGREE ON HORMUZ COMMITTEE

Iran and Oman have agreed to form a joint committee to discuss the future administration of the Strait of Hormuz, including shipping management, related services, and associated fees, during Araghchi and Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf’s visit to Muscat on Tuesday.

Trump has previously threatened to “blow up” Oman if it agreed to jointly manage the Strait. —*Agencies*

CAN’T DEPEND ON AMERICA: BIBI CALLS FOR INDIGENOUS WEAPONS

TEL AVIV, 23 JUNE

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that his country needs to be “free” from military dependence on the US and called for indigenously building his country’s armaments, according to a statement from his office on Tuesday.

“I want armaments independence. I deeply appreciate the support we have received from our American friends, but we need to break free from dependency and build our own independent armaments network," Netanyahu said, addressing military officials, on Thursday.

Netanyahu’s comments come amid an apparent diplomatic rift between the US and Israel over the Islamabad Memor andum.

Netanyahu also signalled that the war wasn’t over.

“We are standing against Iran and its proxies. We have dealt them blows. It is not over yet, but it depends on our strength. Where we will be 30 years from now depends on our strength,” he said.

Trump, meanwhile, stated that he knew how “to deal with Bibi” and stop the war in Lebanon. —*Salar News*

Turkey detains 200 ‘extremists’ ahead of NATO summit

ANKARA, 23 JUNE

Turkish security forces conducted wide-ranging raids in Ankara ahead of next month’s NATO summit, detaining more than 200 individuals suspected of links to extremist groups. Among those detained were 56 alleged Islamic State militants and 35 members of the Revolutionary People’s Liberation Party/ Front, notorious for armed attacks in Turkey. The Turkish authorities, prioritising summit security, have already detained 324 suspected IS members last month. Early on Tuesday, prosecutors issued detention orders for 241 suspects, with 209 subsequently taken into custody. The raids are ongoing. The government plans strict security measures, including banning demonstrations and restricting access to roads near airports and the summit venue. —*PTI*

PENTAGON SEEKS ANOTHER $80 BILLION FOR IRAN WAR

WASHINGTON, 23 JUNE

The Pentagon has requested Senators for roughly $80 billion dollars to cover the cost of the Iran war. The White House Office of Management and Budget has yet to make a formal request to Congress, but multiple officials have confirmed the development. This comes after the White House requested a remarkable USD 1.5 trillion for the defence – a nearly 50 per cent increase over the current fiscal year’s funding levels. Senate Majority Leader John Thune said when it arrives, “we’ll work through it and see where the votes are”.

However, the packages are likely run into trouble from lawmakers who refuse to support Trump’s decision to go to war and are reluctant to give the Pentagon more money when costs of living for Americans are high. —*PTI*

LEBANON-ISRAEL SET FOR NEW TALKS AS STRIKES CONTINUE

BEIRUT, 23 JUNE

Lebanon and Israel were set to hold a new round of direct talks in Washington on Tuesday, even as the IDF continued its strikes in Lebanese territory, killing at least 2 people, according to state run National News Agency.

Notably, the Israel-Lebanon talks come even as Iran has tied the security of Beirut into its deal with Washington.

Lebanon has insisted in preserving its sovereignty, stating that the only meaningful way to peace is direct negotiations with Israel, not through the Iran peace deal.

On Monday, Lebanese President Joseph Aoun discussed a “deconfliction mechanism” for the country with US Vice President JD Vance and Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani. —*Agencies*

Taliban holds closed-door talks with EU

BRUSSELS, 23 JUNE

A delegation from the Afghan Taliban travelled to Brussels on Tuesday for closed-door talks with European Union staff, expected to focus on deportations, said a Taliban official. Rights groups said the meeting undercuts the EU’s human rights obligations and could endanger people in Europe and Afghanistan. Belgium issued 24-hour visas to the Taliban delegation, which includes New Zealand-born Abdul Qahar Balkhi, a spokesperson for the Taliban’s foreign ministry. —*ANI*

—*ANI*

Music mogul Clive Davis dies at 94

NEW YORK, 23 JUNE

Clive Davis, a music industry mogul who launched or revived careers of stars like Whitney Houston, Santana, Carrie Underwood, and Janis Joplin, has died aged 94. He passed in his Manhattan apartment, weeks after hospitalisation for an upper respiratory issue, his publicist Aliza Rabinoff confirmed. Artists including Santana called him “a visionary” and Patti Smith thanked him for “love and support”. Born 4 April, 1932, in Brooklyn, Davis became Columbia Records president and signed Houston as a teen. His influence spanned decades, signing iconic acts like Bruce Springsteen, Patti Smith, and Neil Diamond, shaping modern music with “grace, generosity, and kindness,” his family shared. —*PTI*

Burnham prepares for UK Labour leadership contest

LONDON, 23 JUNE

Andy Burnham, Britain’s newest lawmaker and likely its next prime minister, met Labour colleagues on Tuesday in preparation for a leadership contest in which he may be the only contender.

Burnham is the strong front-runner to replace Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who announced Monday that he will step down within weeks after two years in office marred by missteps and judgment errors that eroded his standing with party and public.

Burnham, a former Cabinet minister who served since 2017 as mayor of Greater Manchester, won a special election last week for a seat in Parliament with the express aim of challenging Starmer for the leadership. But his policies in many areas are unknown and untested.

Burnham’s chances got a big boost on Monday when former Health Secretary Wes Streeting, who was considered his main rival, announced his support.

Britain’s parliamentary system allows governing parties to change leaders – and thus prime ministers – without the need for a national election. The next general election does not have to be held until 2029.

Nominations for the Labour leadership will open 9 July and close a week later. If Burnham is the only contender, he could be prime minister by 17 July. If there is a contest, the winner should be in place by the time Parliament returns from its summer break on 1 September.

- He was a popular mayor of Manchester, overseeing a period of rapid regeneration for the city where the Industrial Revolution was forged, and has pledged to repeat his signature brand of “Manchesterism” on a national scale.

Labour is losing liberal voters to the growing Green Party and facing a rising Reform UK, the Nigel Farage-led anti-immigration party that consistently leads in nationwide opinion polls.

Many Labour members hope Burnham’s people skills and charisma can connect with the public more than the Starmer could ever do. He is expected to make a speech next week outlining some of his economic plans. —*PTI*

Kim: N Korea’s nuke capability must overtake the world

SEOUL, 23 JUNE

The North Korean state news agency KCNA reported on Tuesday that leader Kim Jong Un wants to exercise the country's position as a nuclear state, saying it is the only way to cope with a complex geopolitical security scenario. The country’s nuclear capabilities should overtake the world, he said.

Kim said, at a meeting of the ruling Worker's Party, that "unimaginable, astonishing incidents and events" have taken place in the world recently due to "gangster-like" leading to violent conflict, such as in Europe and West Asia. He also claimed that the US and South Korea are growing their nuclear arsenal in order to attack North Korea.

Kim also ordered the buildup of conventional weapons and a 10,000-ton strategic guided missile cruiser, KCNA said.

Experts say that the statements indicate Kim's rejection of denuclearisation and that he may eventually focus on arms reduction rather than disarmament. —*Salar News*

Awami League activists held on founding anniv

DHAKA, 23 JUNE

Dozens of activists linked to deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina’s Awami League were arrested across Bangladesh as supporters attempted to mark the party’s 77th founding anniversary despite a nationwide ban and heightened security measures.

The Awami League, founded on 23 June 1949 and a key force in Bangladesh’s 1971 Liberation War, was disbanded after Hasina’s government was overthrown in August 2024. The move was later endorsed by Parliament under Prime Minister Tarique Rahman.

Police said 26 activists were arrested in Dhaka alone for staging processions or defying restrictions.

Despite the crackdown, videos circulated online showed supporters carrying party flags and chanting slogans.

On the eve of the anniversary, Hasina, who has lived in India since her ouster, declared on social media: “We were not born to be defeated.”

“We are returning with people’s support with 10 times more strength,” the Awami League said in a social media post.

Authorities deployed army and Border Guard Bangladesh personnel in Dhaka and five districts until 30 June amid fears of unrest.

Tensions were also heightened by the recent deaths of two Awami League activists, with the Opposition alleging custodial abuses.

The incidents triggered local protests, including a brief blockade of a key highway linking Dhaka with the city of Khulna. —*PTI*

Tarique in China with Teesta & jobs on list

Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman arrived in China on Monday from Kuala Lumpur concluding his two-day official visit to Malaysia, where he is set to discuss Teesta River issue, port expansions and maritime logistics, according to Bangladeshi media. Bangladesh is also likely to purchase J-10CE fighter jets from China.

He is also looking to expand Bangladesh’s economic cooperation with China, seeking to showcase the approval of the Chinese Economic and Industrial Zone (CEIZ) in Chittagong, an 800-acre industrial corridor.

‘Israel, US rigged Colombia polls’

BOGOTA, 23 JUNE

Outgoing Colombian President Gustavo Petro claimed that Israel and the US had rigged the presidential elections that took place on Sunday in a post to X, following his loss to Right-wing candidate Abelardo De La Espriella.

"I warned that the Bautista brothers' software was vulnerable, according to the 2018 State Council ruling, and that it should be replaced with publicly available software," Petro stated, adding that he had requested an audit of the software ahead of the elections, but that it had not been allowed. “Since the software was not audited, this terrible vulnerability was not discovered, and a possible defeat was preferred”.

“It is already known that the algorithms that were suspended from the E14 metabase,” he added, insinuating that Israelis had hacked the system. He also alleged that millions of dollars from abroad was invested in discrediting the government and propping up Espriella.

Petro targeted US President Donald Trump, sarcastically inviting him “to speak about Peru, Colombia, and Venezuela and bring blood”. —*Salar News*

WITH TEMPERATURES AT 40°C

40 drown trying to escape France heatwave

PARIS, 23 JUNE

Temperatures will remain exceptionally high in France around the clock “with a still uncertain duration,” said France’s national weather service, Meteo France, as it placed 54 departments under a red heat wave alert. Extreme conditions are expected to last at least until the end of the week, with daytime highs above 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) in many towns.

In a country without widespread air-conditioning, schools, trains and sporting events remain impacted, while at least 40 drowning deaths, most of them youth, have been reported over the past five days.

The iconic Canal Saint-Martin in Paris turned into a swimming pool as the French tried to beat the summer heat —*SCREENGRAB/ X@LUCAUFFRET*

Human-caused climate change is tied to increasing extreme weather, and U.N. climate agency projections say the next five years should shatter more heat records.

Europe is the world’s fastest-warming continent, with temperatures increasing twice as fast as the global average since the 1980s, according to the European Union’s Copernicus Climate Change Service.

Over the last four years, more than 200,000 people across Europe died from heat-related causes, and most of those deaths were preventable, the World Health Organisation’s Europe office said this month. The above-average temperatures can cause heat exhaustion and life-threatening heat stroke.

The EU monitoring agency found that in Europe and globally, 2024 was the hottest year on record and the continent experienced its second-highest number of “heat stress” days. —*PTI*

Bill to ban carriages renamed after Indian teen killed in NY

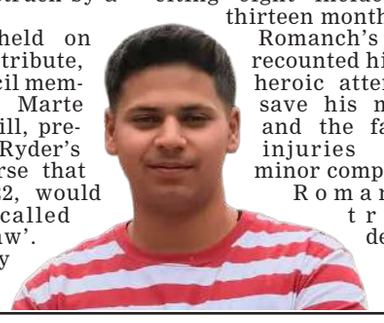
NEW YORK, 23 JUNE

A bill aiming to ban horse carriages in New York City has been renamed in honour of Romanch Mahajan, an 18-year-old Indian who died after falling from a carriage in Central Park last week. Mahajan tried to help his mother, who fell from the carriage as the horse bolted, and was struck by a runaway horse.

A vigil was held on Monday to pay tribute, where City Council member Christopher Marte announced the bill, previously named ‘Ryder’s Law’ after a horse that collapsed in 2022, would now be called ‘Romanch’s Law’. Mahajan’s family called for a ban, condemning the industry for risking lives.

The Animal Legal Defence Fund highlighted horses’ suffering in extreme weather, noting that they work long hours in traffic, risking injury. The Consulate General of India expressed condolences, while the Central Park Conservancy called for the legislation, citing eight incidents in thirteen months.

Romanch’s father recounted his son’s heroic attempt to save his mother, and the family’s injuries were minor compared to Romanch’s tragic death. —*PTI*



— MAGNIFIC

Rupee closes 11P lower at 94.74 against USD

MUMBAI, 23 JUNE

The rupee fell 11 paise to close at 94.74 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, pressured by a strong greenback and weak domestic markets. A decline in global crude oil prices helped cushion a sharper fall, said forex traders. The rupee opened at 94.73, traded between 94.63 and 94.92 before settling. On Monday, it dropped 30 paise to 94.63. Anuj Choudhary from Mirae Asset ShareKhan noted that a firm dollar and weak markets caused the decline, but falling oil prices and US treasury yields limited losses. The dollar index was at 101.09, and Brent crude traded at USD 77.48. Equity markets plunged; the Sensex dropped 893.39 points, Nifty down 278.80 points. *—PTI*

CAG, Israel's State Comptroller sign MoU pact

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

India's Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) and Israel's State Comptroller and Ombudsman have signed an agreement to strengthen cooperation in public sector auditing through knowledge exchange. The MoU provides a framework for collaboration in capacity building, methodologies, technical expertise, training, and best practices. Israeli State Comptroller Matanyahu Englman, also President of EUROSAI, visited India's CAG office, marking a milestone in institutional ties. A bilateral meeting was held between CAG's K Sanjay Murthy and Englman, with discussions on organising bilateral seminars. Englman also delivered a lecture on 'Artificial Intelligence in Public Sector Auditing', sharing insights on emerging technologies' transformative potential. The engagement highlights shared commitment to transparency, accountability, good governance, and innovation. *—PTI*

Markets go into tailspin; Sensex, Nifty drop over 1 pc

Last week, the benchmark indices rallied in four of five trading sessions

MUMBAI, 23 JUNE

Stock market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty faced heavy selling pressure on Tuesday, dropping over 1 per cent, tracking a bearish trend in global markets along with weakness in HDFC Bank and IT firms.

Fresh foreign fund outflows also led to the weak trading in equities.

The 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 893.39 points, or 1.16 per cent, to settle at 76,200.68. During the day, it plunged 1,011.56 points, or 1.31 per cent, to 76,082.51.

The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 278.80 points, or 1.16 per cent, to end at 23,824.10.

Last week, the benchmark indices rallied in four of five trading sessions. In the previous trading session, the benchmarks also registered gains.

Among the 30 Sensex firms, Infosys and Tata Consultancy Services declined over 3 per cent each. Bharat Electronics, Tata Steel, Adani Ports, Eternal, HCL Tech, and State Bank of India were also among the laggers.

- Among the 30 Sensex firms, Infosys and TTCS declined over 3 per cent each. Bharat Electronics, Tata Steel, Adani Ports, Eternal, HCL Tech, and State Bank of India were also among the laggers.

Power Grid, Axis Bank, Sun Pharma, and Maruti Suzuki were the winners.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 635.91 crore on Monday, according to exchange data.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index ended sharply lower. The Kospi tanked 10 per cent.

European markets were trading in negative territory.

"Indian equity markets snapped their recent oil-driven rally and declined sharply alongside global peers as a broad technology-led selloff weighed on sentiment.

"Losses were led by the IT sector, which declined more than 2 per cent, while a weaker rupee and growing expectations of further US monetary tightening added to investor caution and weighed on overall sentiment," Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, which is an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, declined 0.67 per cent to USD 77.46 per barrel.

On Monday, the Sensex climbed 291.17 points, or 0.38 per cent, to settle at 77,094.07. The Nifty surged 89.80 points, or 0.37 per cent, to finally close at 24,102.90. *—PTI*

US entrepreneur asks why Kunal Shah chose Meta over CRED

BENGALURU, 23 JUNE

In a post on X, California-based entrepreneur Harshdeep Rapal, founder of Legitt AI, questioned the motive behind CRED founder Kunal Shah moving to Meta as WhatsApp's global CEO just as the company is about to launch an IPO. Shah will replace Will Cathcart.

Social media users responded that the motivation could be a new challenge or slowing growth.

Reports suggest that 500 million people in India using Meta's messaging services, but the social media giant's payment tool, WhatsApp Pay, has not been as successful.

43-year-old Shah's move is part of a deal which will see the tech giant invest USD 900 million into the 2018 fintech startup as a minority investor, at a valuation of USD 4.5 billion, per a press release.

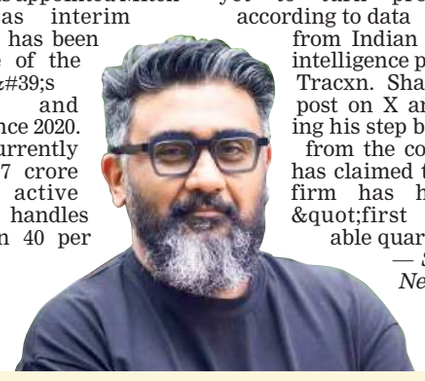
Meta's backing will be used to "accelerate growth, build institutional muscle, and extend its leadership across categories," added the release. The company will not gain access to CRED'S user data, it clarified.

CRED has appointed Miten Sampat as interim CEO, who has been in charge of the company's strategy and finance since 2020.

CRED currently has Rs 1.7 crore monthly active users and handles more than 40 per cent of India's credit card bill payments, according to the company. It is also moving into the lending business. It reduced its operating loss to Rs 298 crore in FY25 from Rs 609 crore in FY24. Its revenue rose 16 per cent to Rs 2,735 crore, while total losses fell to Rs 1,457 crore.

However, despite generating engagement, CRED is yet to turn profitable, according to data from Indian startup intelligence platform Tracxn. Shah, in a post on X announcing his step back from the company, has claimed that the firm has had its "first profitable quarter.

— Salar News



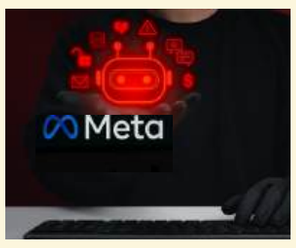
META PAUSES AI TRAINING PROGRAMME THAT TRACKS EMPLOYEES' KEYSTROKES AFTER AN INTERNAL LEAK

MENLO PARK, 23 JUNE

Tech giant Meta Platforms, Incoperated, which conducts business as Meta, is pausing an internal AI program, that tracked employees' keystrokes and mouse movements for training data, after a leak led to sensitive information being accessible across the entire company, according to a report by Business Insider.

The data leak included employees' private conversations, performance notes, and transcriptions, according to an internal security notice seen by WIRED and employees.

The AI training program, called the Model Capability Initiative (MCI), was mandatory for most employees, many of whom protested against its usage as they were not comfortable having their private data recorded, per an earlier report by the outlet.



The recent leak has exacerbated complany employees' heavily frustration.

A Meta spokesperson confirmed the incident to the outlet and said that while the programme was designed with many safeguards, and there has been no indication of improper usage of the data, the company is pausing it while probing the matter. The incident comes at a time when Meta is already grappling with multiple security issues.

A flaw in its AI chatbot allowed people to hijack high-profile Instagram accounts in May.

In March, flawed instructions by an AI agent, when implemented by a Meta employee, led to a large amount of sensitive information being exposed internally. *—Salar News*

Warrant issue to Birla firm gets Vi ₹1,182.5 cr

MUMBAI, 23 JUNE

Telecom operator Vodafone Idea has allotted 43 crore warrants to Suryaja Investments Pte Ltd, an Aditya Birla Group entity and promoter group member, raising Rs 1,182.50 crore as part of its ongoing capital raising exercise. The allotment was approved by its Capital Raising Committee at a board meeting held on Tuesday.

As per the terms of the allotment, Suryaja Investments has paid 25 per cent of the issue price upfront, amounting to Rs 2.75 per warrant. This has resulted in an immediate capital infusion of Rs 1,182.50 crore into the company.

Vodafone said each warrant is convertible into, or exchangeable for, one fully paid-up equity shares of the company having a face value of Rs 10 per share at a premium of Rs 1 per share.

- With a face value of Rs 10 per share at a premium of Rs 1 per share, full conversion, the warrant issue could translate into a total investment of Rs 4,730.

At full conversion, the warrant issue could translate into a total investment of Rs 4,730 crore in the company.

A stock warrant is a certificate issued directly by a company that gives an investor the right to buy or sell a specific number of shares at a predetermined price.

Suryaja Investments Pte Ltd is an Aditya Birla Group entity and forms part of Vodafone Idea's promoter group. Vodafone Idea is currently trading at Rs 14.62 per share on the NSE. *—ANI*

RBI injects Rs 1.41 lakh cr into banks via VRR auction

MUMBAI, 23 JUNE

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Tuesday injected Rs 1,41,171 crore of transient liquidity into the banking system through a seven-day variable rate repo (VRR) auction.

The funds were infused at a cut-off and weighted average rate of 5.26 per cent, according to the RBI's release.

This was done after the liquidity in the banking system turned into a deficit of Rs 19,971.89 crore as on Tuesday, from a surplus of Rs 30,685.11 crore as on Monday.

Experts attributed the liquidity tightening to GST payment outflows from the banking system. This shift into deficit territory has put upward pressure on overnight money market rates, with the weighted average call money rate trading at 5.43 per cent — 18 basis points above the RBI's repo rate.

Tri-party repo (treps) rates were also trading 5-7 basis points above the repo rate.

Of the total infusion, the RBI injected Rs 36,300 crore on Monday via overnight VRR, Rs 16,750 crore on Friday through three-day VRR auction, Rs 72,300 crore on Wednesday through two VRR auctions, Rs 89,440 crore via a seven-day VRR auction on 16 June, and Rs 28,220 crore through an overnight VRR auction on 15 June. *—PTI*

BHARTI AIRTEL RAISES STAKE IN AIRTEL AFRICA TO 79%

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

Bharti Airtel has raised its stake in Airtel Africa from 62.73 per cent to about 79 per cent through a share-swap deal valued at approximately Rs 28,200 crore, according to a company filing on Tuesday.

The transaction involves Bharti Airtel issuing equity shares to Indian Continent Investment Limited (ICIL), a promoter group entity, on a preferential basis, in exchange for its 16.31 per cent stake in Airtel Africa.

The deal allows the company to increase its stake in a high-growth asset without taking on additional debt or deploying cash, the statement said.

Bharti Enterprises founder and chairman Sunil Bharti Mittal said Airtel Africa would become a $10 billion revenue company within a few years, making it a strong subsidiary of Airtel India.

The Africa business had reported a 29.5 per cent increase in revenue to USD 6.4 billion in FY26 from USD 4.9 billion in FY25. *—PTI*

INDIA'S CAPITAL MARKETS DRIVEN BY SIP: JP MORGAN

MUMBAI, 23 JUNE

India's capital markets continue to be propelled by strong inflows through Systematic Investment Plans (SIPs), despite subdued equity returns and foreign investor selling, according to a JP Morgan report. The report states, "India's capital-markets story remains fundamentally driven by SIP-led financialisation, despite weak equity returns."

Over two years, the Nifty 50 delivered a 0.8 per cent CAGR in rupee terms and -3.2 per cent in US dollar terms, with FPIs selling around USD 36 billion in FY25 and FY26. Meanwhile, retail participation remains resilient, with SIP flows rising 48 per cent year-on-year to Rs 310 billion in May 2026, contributing 77 per cent of total industry inflows in FY26.

JP Morgan expects inflows to stay strong, supported by favourable tax and policy measures. The report highlights structural growth in exchange trading volumes, driven by index options and retail participation. *—ANI*

Adani Group to invest Rs 1 lakh crore across airports in next 5 years

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

Adani Group is planning an investment of Rs 90,000 crore to Rs 1 lakh crore across all airports over five years, Jeet Adani, Director at Adani Airport Holdings, said after the announcement for commercial flights from Mundra airport with Star Air connecting key domestic destinations.

Jeet Adani said the five-year investment plan "continues to be the case" for the group's aviation portfolio.

On future expansion, he added that the group will bid aggressively when the government opens private bidding for 11 new airports.

Adani Mundra Airport on Tuesday announced the launch of its inaugural scheduled flight service connecting Mumbai and Goa (in pic) the launch of its inaugural scheduled flight service connecting Mumbai and Goa. This pivotal air link, established the partnership with Star Air for unprecedented economic potential and growth for the Kutch region. *—ANI*

Akasa Air plans IPO in 2-4 years, says CFO

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

Akasa Air intends to launch its initial share offering within 2-4 years, depending on milestone achievement, said CFO Ankur Goel. The airline, launched in August 2022, operates 39 aircraft across 34 destinations, aiming for 226 aircraft by 2032. Goel stated, "IPO is not a question of if, but when." emphasising strategic value creation.

The carrier was EBITDA positive during September 2025-March 2026 and is optimistic about long-term growth despite industry headwinds. Capacity is expected to increase by 30 per cent this year, with further expansion into Southeast Asia.

Fares will remain dynamic, aligning with demand. The airline reported a 37 per cent rise in operating revenue, with a 30 per cent capacity growth. *—PTI*

'India's pharma dependent on Chinese imports'

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

India's pharmaceutical supply chain remains heavily dependent (65 per cent) on Chinese imports for critical active pharmaceutical ingredient (APIs) and key starting materials, NITI Aayog said on Tuesday.

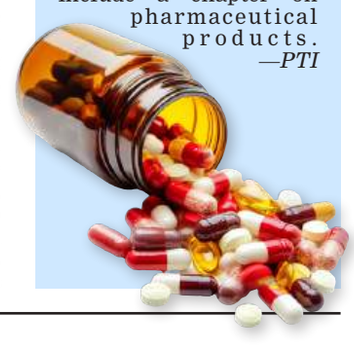
The report pointed out that weak innovation and a commercialisation ecosystem have created uncertainty for innovators and long-term investments. It pitched for promoting diversification into high-value pharmaceutical segments.

The report also called for enhancing regulatory transparency and stronger industry–academia technology transfer in life-sciences clusters to accelerate patent commercialisation, research collaboration, and start-up incubation.

India remained the world's eighth-largest services exporter in 2025.

Meanwhile, the West Asia conflict was a short-term supply chain problem, but it has taught that countries like India should diversify the sources of their energy needs, NITI Aayog vice-chairman Ashok Kumar Lahiri said on Tuesday while releasing the edition.

He said the NITI Aayog has also suggested that when India negotiates a free trade agreement with any country or bloc, then it should include a chapter on pharmaceutical products. *—PTI*



Public sector banks losing gold loan market share

MUMBAI, 23 JUNE

Public sector banks' dominance in gold loan sourcing is waning as private banks and NBFCs gain traction, reports Experian. The market share of public banks fell from 45 per cent in Q4FY25 to 37 per cent in Q4FY26, while NBFCs increased from 33 per cent to 44 per cent.

NBFCs have become the fastest-growing lenders, overtaking public banks in sourcing contribution. Public banks still lead in Priority Sector Gold Loans (PSGL), with 88 per cent market share in Q4FY26, down 2 per cent YoY.

PSGL is seem as stable growth opportunity, supported by new customers across rural and semi-urban. Growth is driven by high ticket sizes rather than volume expansion. *—PTI*

SHARE PRICE FALLS 23%

SpaceX loses $600 billion in 3 days

BROWNSVILLE, 23 JUNE

Days after making its stock market debut, shares of Elon Musk's SpaceX have seen a major drop for the third day, wiping out $600 billion in revenue and closing at USD 154.60 per share on Monday – a 16 per cent drop and their lowest price ever. The company's market capitalization is now just above $2 trillion and its three-day decline has extended to 23 per cent.

Experts suspect the firm may have fallen prey to profit booking, and that it is pushing too aggressively into investing in artificial intelligence (AI). According to a Bloomberg report, SpaceX is planning to raise at least $20 billion through an investment-grade bond offering – possibly to support its work in AI. It also announced a major deal providing computing resources to a startup called Reflection AI.

People in the know further suspect that the company's initial boom on the stock market was aided by retail investors, and that their rate of purchase slowed significantly since then, further bringing down share prices, per Bloomberg. Critics also say that while SpaceX's expansion into AI gave it a broader appeal than just being a space and satellite company, investors in the firm are paying now for growth opportunities and returns that will come far in the future.

Even after losing an enormous amount of value over the past three days, SpaceX's shares remain above their IPO price of USD 135, and it's still one of the most valuable firms in the world. *—Salar News*

MESSI, MBAPPE AND HAALAND DAZZLE ON THE SAME DAY

EAST RUTHERFORD, 23 JUNE

After Lionel Messi scored two goals to set the World Cup record and Kylian Mbappe kept pace in the career chase, Erling Haaland delivered another dazzling performance on a showcase day for the tournament's top stars.

Haaland scored twice for Norway in the first 15 minutes of the second half of a 3-2 win over Senegal on Monday night, making up for clanking a shot off the post and getting denied on a header just before half-time.

His performance came hours after Messi scored two for Argentina and Mbappé did the same for France.

Teammate Kristian Thorstvedt called Haaland a big-game player who lives for these moments.

Roughly a month away from his 26th birthday, Haaland is showing he can keep up with some of soccer's more experienced stars while playing on a team without the same pedigree or championship history.

"He is the best striker," coach Stale Solbakken said through an interpreter.

"He is not playing for France or Argentina. He scores for Norway."

The three have combined to score 13 goals in the World Cup: five for Messi and four each for Mbappe and Haaland in the race for the Golden Boot, which Iraq coach Graham Arnold predicted will be a very good competition between them. "It's easier to win the Golden Boot when you play for France and Argentina," Solbakken said.

"But we'll try to give Erling more games and more help in the next games."

Messi became the World Cup's career scoring leader with 18 goals when he and Argentina beat Austria in Arlington, Texas.

Mbappe is now at 16, tied with former record holder Miroslav Klose, after he and France beat Iraq 3-0 in Philadelphia.

Playing in his first World Cup, Haaland is at four. Norway last qualified in 1998 -- two years before he was born.

"Let's be happy, every single Norwegian on the planet," Haaland said.

"I'm part of something special. Norway's part of something special. We're making history."

The 6-foot-5 Manchester City striker has now scored in 12 consecutive competitive matches for Norway. He has 24 goals over that stretch, and the last time Haaland did not score for Norway in a game that mattered was 13 October 2024. *—PTI*

Mbappe scores twice for France

France storm into World Cup knockouts

PHILADELPHIA, 23 JUNE

Kylian Mbappe scored twice to move into a tie for second in career World Cup goals with 16, as France played through the tournament's first rain delay to beat Iraq 3-0 on Monday and advance to the knockout stage.

Ballon d'Or winner Ousmane Dembele also scored for Les Bleus, giving fans who stuck out a rainy night in Philadelphia a reason to cut loose.

Mbappe scored in the 14th and 54th minutes to cap a momentous and soggy 100th international appearance for one of the best players in the world.

Mbappe's first goal gave France a 1-0 lead at halftime, when heavy rain and an incoming thunderstorm prompted a delay of just over two hours and forced the grounds crew to squeegee water off the swampy Kentucky bluegrass at Lincoln Financial Field.

Weather aside, this game – as so many do for France – belonged to Mbappe as he tries to keep pace on the career goals list with new record holder Lionel Messi.

Playing in his third World Cup, the 27-year-old Mbappe matched Miroslav Klose of Germany on the goals list and moved one ahead of Brazil great Ronaldo.

Messi scored twice for Argentina earlier Monday to set the tournament record at 18. He equalled Klose with his first World Cup hat trick in Argentina's 3-0 win over Algeria last Tuesday night in Kansas City, Missouri.

Mbappe scored his third goal of the tournament with a left-footed strike – his supposed weaker foot – from the edge of the box that got past Iraq goalkeeper Ahmed Basil, who got his first start in the tournament after captain Jalal Hassan allowed all four goals in Iraq's 4-1 loss to Norway.

For his second goal, Mbappe took advantage of a poor pass to the goalkeeper by Iraq defender Zaid Tahseen. Dembele controlled the ball and passed to Mbappe, who tapped it in with his right foot. He helped France win the World Cup in 2018 and reach the final in 2022, when he was awarded the Silver Ball as the second-best player. *—PTI*

WC SEES FIRST WEATHER DELAY AS FRANCE-IRAQ GAME PAUSED

Heavy rain and thunderstorms prompted a delay of just over two hours at halftime of Monday's World Cup match between France and Iraq.

It was the first rain delay of the tournament and the first time in at least several decades that a World Cup match was delayed midgame because of inclement weather.

The delay was announced a few minutes before 6pm (local time) and the game resumed at 8pm. There was also heavy rain ahead of Monday night's game between Norway and Senegal in East Rutherford, New Jersey, which started on time.

With France leading 1-0 at halftime, scoreboard messages directed the crowd at Lincoln Financial Field to take shelter in the stadium's covered areas, warning that a severe storm was on the way.

Sheets of rain fell through halftime as thousands of fans huddled under balconies.

The stoppage was initially expected to extend the 15-minute halftime break by another 15 minutes. As the delay dragged on, stadium officials announced that "the game will resume when deemed safe."

They returned to the field to warm up after about 1 hour, 40 minutes, prompting cheers from the crowd. Crews used squeegees to push standing water toward the sideline of the swampy field. FIFA long had a reputation for continuing matches even through extreme weather. *—PTI*

Haaland scores twice as Norway beat Senegal 3-2

EAST RUTHERFORD, 23 JUNE

Erling Haaland scored twice to raise his World Cup goals total to four, as Norway advanced to the Round of 32 with a 3-2 win over Senegal on Monday night.

Marcus Pederson put the Vikings ahead in the 43rd minute after replacing an injured teammate, and Haaland kept up his incredible goals streak in the 48th and 58th minutes to build a 3-1 lead.

First he ran onto Martin Odegaard's pass and put a left-footed shot past the outstretched left hand of goalkeeper Edouard Mendy, capping an end-to-end counterattack for a 2-0 lead.

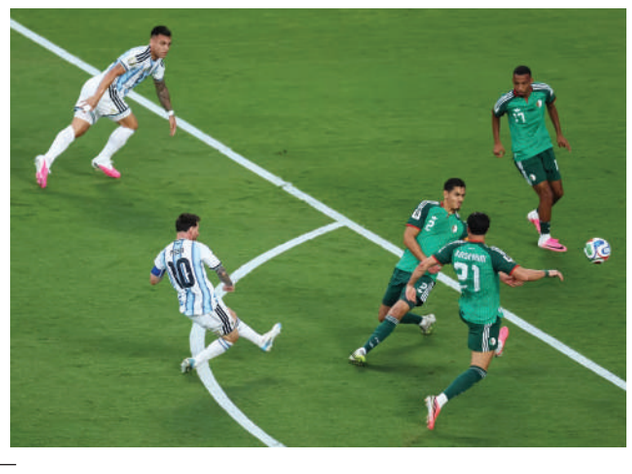
For his second goal, Haaland tunnelled through the defence and 8 yards out raised his weaker right foot to volley in Patrick Berg's pass.

Haaland has 24 goals in his last 12 international games – scoring at least once in every match – and 59 goals in 52 international appearances.

The 25-year-old striker joined England's Harry Kane in 2018 as the only players in the last 50 years with two-goal games in their first two World Cup appearances.

He is second in the Golden Boot race, one behind Argentina's Lionel Messi and tied with France's Kylian Mbappe. *—PTI*

ALGERIA RALLIES PAST JORDAN 2-1 FOR ITS 1ST WC WIN SINCE 2014



SANTA CLARA, 23 JUNE

Algeria scored off two corner kicks in the second half to rally from an early deficit and defeat Jordan 2-1 on Monday to bolster its chances of advancing to the knockout round of the World Cup.

Second-half substitute Nadhir Benbouali headed in a corner kick in the 69th minute and Amine Gouiri provided the game-winner in the 82nd to give Algeria its first win at the World Cup since 2014.

"We deserved to win this game," Algeria coach Vladimir Petkovic said. "It certainly gives us a lot of confidence and belief ahead of our next match."

The Jordanians had taken the lead for the first time at a World Cup on a first-half goal by Nizar Al Rashdan but couldn't withstand the continual pressure from Algeria in the second half.

This marked the first time Algeria had ever won a World Cup game after conceding the first goal. The Algerians had seven losses and two draws previously when that happened. Jordan is out of contention for the knockout rounds following a second straight loss. *—PTI*

Win over Saudi Arabia would send Cape Verde to the round of 32

MIAMI GARDENS, 23 JUNE

Here's something that very few could have reasonably expected coming into this World Cup: Cape Verde controls its own destiny with one match left in group play.

That's right. With a win on Friday against Saudi Arabia, the tiny nation of about 500,000 people and about 15 million new Instagram followers will be headed to the round of 32. Even a draw might be — should be — enough to earn a spot in the knockout round.

The Blue Sharks were long shots entering the World Cup; some books had them at no better than 12 percent to advance from the group stage. They're currently favored to move on. "It's in our hands," defender Roberto Lopes said. "We have to go and take it."

A pair of draws — first against Spain to begin group play, then rallying for a 2-2 result against Uruguay on Sunday — has Cape Verde still searching for its first win in its initial World Cup appearance. Still, the team is in an ideal position.

Spain leads Group H with four points. Uruguay and Cape Verde are next with two points each, while Saudi Arabia is last with one point.

The top two teams from each group advance to the round of 32 along with the top eight third-place teams in the 12 groups. *—PTI*

Court upholds AITA's authority in federation reforms

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

The Delhi High Court has reaffirmed the primacy of the All India Tennis Association's (AITA) General Body in deciding amendments to its constitution, directing that proposed changes be placed before the federation's members for clause-by-clause consideration and voting. A Division Bench of Justices Tejas Karia and Madhu Jain passed the interim order while hearing cross appeals filed by the AITA and former Davis Cup player Somdev Devvarman against an 27 April judgment of a single judge. The AITA had challenged the appointment of former Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh High Court Chief Justice Gita Mittal as administrator and sought setting aside of portions of the 27 April judgment that vested extensive powers in her, including powers relating to constitutional amendments, elections and administration of the federation. *—PTI*

England series: Shedge replaces Reddy in squad

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

The promising Suryansh Shedge has replaced injured all-rounder Nitish Reddy in India's squads for the upcoming T20I series against Ireland and England, the BCCI said on Tuesday.

Earlier, India were dealt a blow as Reddy was ruled out of the white ball tour of UK with a quadriceps injury that he had sustained during the recent ODI series against Afghanistan.

"The men's selection committee has named Suryansh Shedge as a replacement for Nitish Kumar Reddy in India's squads for the upcoming T20I series against Ireland and England," the BCCI said in a statement.

Reddy reported left quadriceps discomfort after the third ODI against Afghanistan on June 20. Following a subsequent medical assessment, the BCCI medical team has recommended a period of rehabilitation, ruling him out of both T20I series.

Shedge earned the call-up following a string of impressive performances for India A in the recently concluded tri-series in Sri Lanka. Batting in the middle order, the 23-year-old scored 147 runs in five matches and also chipped in with the ball, bowling 23 overs across the tournament.

He was also one of the standout performers for Mumbai in their victorious Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy campaign in 2024-25, scoring 131 runs at a strike rate of 251.92 in the lower middle order.

Reddy was also supposed to fill in the void left by Hardik Pandya, who also has quadriceps niggle and is not in condition to bowl 10 overs in ODIs.

"Nitish Kumar Reddy has been ruled out of the Ireland series. The MRI has revealed swelling with fiber disruption in the left quadriceps. He has been asked to report at COE for further assessment," the medical bulletin stated. *—PTI*

A dream is fulfilled: Sooryavanshi on India selection

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

Teenaged batting sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi says getting selected in the Indian T20 squad is the "biggest step" of his nascent career and he does not have words to describe how it feels.

The 15-year-old was included in the India squad for the tours of Ireland and England starting 26 June after a stellar run in the IPL 2026, where he scored 776 runs for Rajasthan Royals at a strike-rate over 230.

"The reason I picked up a bat from day one and went to the cricket ground for practice, and today that dream is fulfilled," Sooryavanshi said in a video posted by BCCI.

"The biggest step in the journey was completed today. I truly cannot put this feeling into words." He started his journey from Samastipur in Bihar and came to limelight in IPL 2025, scoring a hundred against Gujarat Titans. *—PTI*

AUDACIOUS COMEBACK

Serena makes singles return at Wimbledon

LONDON, 23 JUNE

This is the real deal now.

After initially returning in doubles, Serena Williams is ramping up her tennis return with singles, too.

At Wimbledon, of all places.

All eyes will be on the 44-year-old Williams when she competes in the first round of the grass-court Grand Slam, which starts Monday.

While she has played two doubles warmup matches recently, Williams hasn't contested an official singles match in nearly four years.

ESPN commentator Mary Joe Fernandez called it "a sign of confidence" that Serena is prepared to enter the sport's most prestigious tournament without having played a singles match in so long. "But if anybody can do it," Fernandez said, "it's Serena."

Williams has accepted wild card invitations for both singles and doubles (with sister Venus) from the All England Club.

Williams made her return this month by playing two doubles matches with two different partners. She won with Victoria Mboko at Queen's Club and lost with Karolina Muchova at the Berlin Open.

With 23 Grand Slam singles titles — seven of them at Wimbledon — and 14 more in doubles (all with Venus as her partner), nobody is questioning her qualifications, experience or aura.

"No one's going to want to face her," said Fernandez, who coached Williams as Fed Cup captain and on the US Olympic team. *—PTI*